

INTRODUCTION TO THE PURITANS



ERROLL HULSE (1931-2017)

INTRODUCTION TO THE PURITANS

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—Erroll Hulse

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INTRODUCTION

THE RELEVANCE OF THE PURITANS

Who were the Puritans? When did they live? What did they accomplish? What did they teach? History is not a popular subject; we cannot assume that those who are British are automatically well-educated in English history. And it is rare for those outside Britain to know English history. How can we introduce Christians to the best theological inheritance ever?

My concern extends beyond narrating the story. I want to create enthusiasm for the Puritans in order to profit from their practical example, and benefit from their unique balance of doctrine, experience, and practice. The Puritans were men of deep theological understanding and vision, who prayed for the earth to be “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14).

Today, missionaries are involved as never before in taking the gospel to all the world. Bible-based Christianity is spreading gradually in most of the 240 nations of the world. Believers have multiplied in great numbers, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the Far East, and South America. Teaching that engenders holy living and stability is vastly needed. Historically, the Puritan epoch^a is best able to supply this need, for they were strongest where the churches in general are weakest today.^b

1. Puritanism and the World Today

In face of the philosophic and religious trends of today, the Puritans are certainly relevant. Gradually from the 1960s and 1970s, the Western world has moved philosophically from Modernism to Postmodernism (PM).^c For about two centuries, thinking has been shaped by the Enlightenment,^d with its emphasis on human reason and optimism about human ability and achievement. This arrogance has by-passed God and His revelation, and led to the collapse of morality. Is Puritanism relevant within the present

^a Lettered footnotes are added by CHAPEL LIBRARY. Numbered endnotes are by the author (see *References* at the end of each Part).

epoch – particular period of time as marked by distinctive character or events.

^b See *Ten Indictments Against the Modern Church* by Paul Washer, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c **Postmodernism** – philosophy that there are no absolute truths or moral values, that each person can decide for themselves what is true for them. See “Postmodernism” by Erroll Hulse, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^d **Enlightenment** – philosophical movement of the 1700s that emphasized the use of reason and science to scrutinize previously accepted doctrines and traditions, and that brought about many humanitarian reforms, in effect reducing society’s reliance upon God.

philosophical climate of Postmodernism? Writing on the subject of PM, Andrew Patterson suggests that the Puritan approach is relevant. He maintains,

Genuine spirituality consists in a rediscovery of the cohesive and comprehensive nature of the grace of God in the life of believers. [This] rejects the isolating, fracturing, and compartmentalizing effects of the last two centuries, and looks back to the time of the Puritans and Pietists, when there was an approach that was far healthier, vibrant, holistic, real, scriptural, and God-honouring.^a

With the demise of Modernism (the Enlightenment), we now have a vacuum. This provides us with a unique opportunity to rebuild the foundations. We are challenged to understand and apply the Word of God today. As we do so, we can look back and draw on the legacies of the Puritans. We can avoid their mistakes and weaknesses, but learn a great deal from their strengths. Part Three consists of ten subjects in which we can obtain help from the Puritans.

PM is fiercely antinomian.^b It is admitted that people make mistakes, but the word “sin” is seldom mentioned; and the idea that we all sin against God is avoided. Right and wrong are judged according to human feelings. The idea that God has an unchangeable, holy, Moral Law^c by which He will judge every person is unpopular.

2. Puritanism and the Church Today

What does Puritanism have to say to the different evangelical sectors of the Church^d world-wide today?

^a Andrew Patterson in *Foundations*, Autumn 1997; pastor of Kensington Baptist Church, Bristol, England.

^b **Antinomian** – from the Greek *anti*, against, and *nomos*, law; antinomianism basically means “against law.” It generally means one who holds the theological view that God’s Law has no place in the life of a believer. See *The Law and the Saint*, by A. W. Pink, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c **Moral Law** – God’s Law was given by Moses to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy contain its provisions. The laws can be generally placed in three groups, although Scripture does not use these terms: 1) Ceremonial laws pertaining to the worship connected with the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple (see Heb 8-9). The requirements of the ceremonial laws for Temple worship ceased when Christ fulfilled their intent and became a better sacrifice once for all (Heb 9:11-28). 2) Civil laws were given to govern relationships between men in society. Many believe these ceased when the nation of Israel fell under Gentile rule in AD 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Many moral principles of the civil laws still apply today. 3) The moral laws were given special place in their summary as the Ten Commandments. While Jesus Christ fulfilled all the Law in His life of perfect obedience, He emphasized the Moral Law in His teaching as applicable to the Church. The Moral Law continues into the Christian era to govern believers in their moral choices for holy living. See *London Baptist Confession of 1689*, chapter 19, “Of the Law of God.”

^d **Church** – *Church* capitalized in this book refers either to the universal Church of all believers throughout time, or to the Church of England; the meaning to be determined by its context.

Neo-orthodoxy—Of the theologians classified as Neo-orthodox, Karl Barth (1886-1968) is the most significant as he, more than any other this century, affected the course of Protestant theology in Europe and beyond. He set some on the road of studying Luther, Calvin, and the Reformation of the 16th century.^a But while Barth challenged the liberal^b establishment, there was a failure to set the record straight with regard to liberal views of the Bible. For instance, it is absolutely vital to believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve.^c It is essential to endorse the supernaturalism^d that pervades the biblical records. With Neo-orthodoxy one is never sure about the foundations; it is like walking on sinking sand. Puritanism shares with Neo-orthodoxy the challenge to use the mind, to think, and to analyze. But the strength of the Puritans is that there is never any question about the validity of the Scriptures. One walks always on the solid rock of the infallible^e Word of God.

Fundamentalism—Thankfully, the Church of Jesus Christ on earth is always wider and larger than any one segment or denomination. The evangelical movement known as Fundamentalism is only a part of the wider body. That movement gathered momentum in the 1920s and 1930s. Fundamentalists came together into a movement out of the need to combat modernist theology. The leaders drew up a list of basic truths designed to keep intact doctrines that were denied or undermined by liberals. Fundamentalism was strong in the USA and spread to other countries. The Puritans would agree with the passion to defend and promote basic truths, such as the reliability of Scripture, the Trinity, and the deity of Christ.

Unhappily, Fundamentalism added to the “basics” a premillennial^f view of prophecy and in some cases Dispensationalism,^a which views history as specific time periods. The

Here, it refers to the universal Church of all truly saved people world-wide throughout history. When not capitalized, *church* refers to a local congregation.

^a **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German Roman Catholic monk, theologian, university professor, and church reformer, whose messages inspired the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.

John Calvin (1509-1564) – Father of Reformed and Presbyterian theology. Calvin lectured to theological students and preached an average of five sermons a week during his 25 years serving in Geneva.

The Reformation – the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century led by Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, and many others, which sought to reform some of the erroneous beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church to the truths of the Bible, especially justification by faith alone (Rom 3:24, 28).

^b **liberal** – holding theological views that the Bible contains errors and supernatural events have natural explanations, some even denying the deity of Christ.

^c **historicity of Adam and Eve** – Creationism, as opposed to evolution. See *Evolution or Creation?* and *Understanding the Times* by Ken Ham, both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^d **supernaturalism** – God’s working miracles apart from natural laws.

^e **infallible** – not capable of error.

^f **premillennial** – pertaining to the belief that 1) Christ will rule in a literal earthly kingdom lasting 1,000 years, and 2) Christ’s second coming will occur before He begins this earthly kingdom.

biblical basis for these periods is tenuous to say the least,^b yet the system is imposed by its propagators in an arbitrary way on the Bible. The Puritans were mostly postmillennial.^c A small number were premillennial. Eschatology^d was not made a point of division. We can learn from the Puritans not to major on minors. Christ's second coming to judgment; the end of the world; the universal, physical resurrection from the dead; eternal heaven and hell are major issues in which we cannot compromise. But apart from a general outline, we cannot map out the future. Evangelical unity is a precious commodity; we should avoid damaging unity over matters that are not central.

Fundamentalists have also been inclined to add such issues as a ban on alcohol, card-playing, tobacco, dancing, and theater going. This has been the cause of endless strife and division. For instance, concerning alcohol, the Bible teaches temperance, not total abstinence (Eph 5:18). Wine is used at the Lord's Table. Some fundamentalists even try to change the meaning of the word *wine* to uphold their total abstinence view. Puritanism is a wonderful antidote to the harmful and needless divisions that are caused by adding man-made rules to Scripture. Worldliness is an enemy; [but] the cure for it is in the heart. A man can keep many rules but be worldly still, and at the same time possess a deadly spirit of Pharisaic^e self-righteousness.

Puritanism concentrates on the great issue of the state of a person's soul. When a soul is truly joined to Christ, every part of him—his thoughts, his words, and his actions—will be subject to the Word of God. While he makes rules for his own life, he will avoid making them for others. The Puritans included a chapter in the *Westminster Confession*^f on the subject of Christian liberty and liberty of conscience. The Puritan message is one of liberty combined with self-control and discipline. The Puritan confessions of faith—Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist—are silent where the Scripture is silent. For instance, there is nothing in the Bible about smoking, but there are passages which urge that we should care for our bodies as temples of the Holy Spir-

^a **Dispensationalism** – system of theology that divides the Word of God into arbitrary periods with supposed differences in the way God saves men from their sins. It proposes that the Old Testament saints were not a part of the Church of God, and that the Law pertained only to the nation of Israel, having no bearing on the Christian as a guide to moral living.

^b See *Scofield or the Scriptures* by Paul E. Sisco, and *A Candid Examination of the Scofield Bible* by Albertus Pieters; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c **postmillennial** – doctrine in which the kingdom of Christ and the Church will experience much more expansion on earth before the Second Coming. The thousand years are understood by some as a final period of earthly Christian triumph following the spread of the gospel. Others agree with amillennialists in identifying Revelation 20:1-6 with the entire period that begins with the resurrection of Christ, without a literal 1,000 year period.

^d **eschatology** – the part of systematic theology that deals with last things.

^e **Pharisaic** – pertaining to the ancient Jewish sect noted for strict obedience to Jewish traditions, and which came to be self-righteous and sinfully proud of their religion as compared to others.

^f **Westminster Confession of Faith** – one of the great confessions of the Christian faith, produced in 1645-1646 by an assembly of 121 theologians appointed by the “Puritan” Long Parliament to make proposals for reforming the Church of England.

it (1Co 6:19). Liberation from harmful habits comes through the freedom imparted by Christ. That freedom comes by the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit.

The New Evangelicalism—Fundamentalism has worn an angry face, being fiercely separatistic, intolerant, and aggressive. It has been viewed as the religion of the clenched fist. It was inevitable, therefore, that more friendly and reasonable avenues of expression would be sought. This came in the form of The New Evangelicalism: broad, scholarly, and friendly. However, this movement within evangelicalism has been troubled by compromise on the central issue of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. The New Evangelicalism split over the issue of the inerrancy of Scripture. Again Puritanism is commended. While the Puritans could not anticipate the details of this controversy, we appreciate the solid foundation they laid with regard to the nature and authority of Scripture in the opening chapter of *The Westminster Confession*.

Pentecostalism—The Pentecostal movement, which is as wide and diverse as a rainbow, is noted for emphasis on three important subjects: the reality of spiritual experience, the demonstration of spiritual power, and joy in public worship. These matters were also stressed by the Puritans.

First, the Puritans placed great stress on the spiritual experience of God’s free grace in conversion. The parameters of spiritual experience with regard to joy in justification, the love of the Father in adoption, patience in tribulation, and enjoyment of Christ were explored to the full by the Puritans. The Puritan view is that we are now complete in Christ. Spiritual experience consists of the ongoing application of the believer’s experimental^a union with the three Persons of the Trinity. The New Testament does not suggest or command a specific second experience after conversion—as though something has to be added to what we already are in Christ. Many in the Pentecostal movement concede that all who are in Christ have been baptized spiritually into Christ (1Co 12:12). No second specific experience is mandatory, and no second experience is to be regarded as a type of “open sesame” to a Pandora’s box^b of new experiences. The Puritans would concur that spiritual power or the anointing of the Holy Spirit is needed not only for preaching, but generally for service and endurance in tribulation. The Holy Spirit is always at work in the believer to correct, guide, comfort, and empower.

Second, there is a stress in some Pentecostal denominations on the continuation of signs, wonders, and miracles. The Puritan view is that the apostles and prophets of the New Testament were extraordinary. They were given a special enduement for the work of setting the foundations [before the New Testament Scriptures were written]. We do not have to repeat their work. It is not necessary to vindicate^c the Word of God with new signs and wonders. Puritan teaching is wonderfully liberating because spiritual

^a **experimental** – involving personal experience; experiential.

^b **Pandora’s box** – artifact in Greek mythology connected with the myth of Pandora in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. In modern times an idiom has grown from it meaning a source of many varied, great, and unforeseen troubles.

^c **vindicate** – clear from criticism; uphold by evidence.

leaders are not required to walk on water, replace missing limbs, raise the dead, or perform stupendous miracles such as creating fish and bread. The Word of God is all-sufficient, and we do not need to exercise the supernatural gifts of prophecies, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

As we examine the history of the Christian Church through the centuries to the current time, the absence of miracles is evident. A major ethical embarrassment takes place when miracles are offered, especially miracles of healing, and then failure is evident. How sad it is to claim to be a miracle-worker and then to disappoint the hopes of hurting people. When such promises fail, disillusionment sets in that is very deep and wounding. We do not make promises we cannot fulfil. Rather, we point to the promise that will never fail, and that is the promise of the gospel: eternal life to everyone who repents and believes (Mar 1:15).

Third, there is the need for joyful public worship. Dull, lifeless worship is a contradiction of the joy of salvation. The regulative principle is important. This is a principle by which public worship is regulated according to the specifics of the New Testament. In other words, we should engage only in spiritual worship that is specified by Scripture: the public reading of Scripture, preaching, intercessory prayer, and singing. There is no specification as to how these elements are to be arranged. This suggests freedom. There is no reason why we should not have great joy and edification in our public worship. We do not need to resort to imitating the world or to entertainment. We can combine dignity and reverence with joy and gladness. Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), in an exposition on John 4:24, places the focus on God as central in worship when he refers to some of the essential elements involved:

God is a Spirit infinitely happy, therefore we must approach Him with cheerfulness. He is a Spirit of infinite majesty, therefore we must come before Him with reverence. He is a Spirit infinitely high, therefore we must offer up our sacrifices with deepest humility. He is a Spirit infinitely holy, therefore we must address Him with purity. He is a Spirit infinitely glorious, we therefore must acknowledge His excellency. He is a Spirit provoked by us, therefore we must offer up our worship in the name of a pacifying Mediator and Intercessor.^a

Needless to say, tedium must be avoided in worship. The challenge for preachers not to weary their hearers will be addressed in a separate chapter on preaching.

Shallow evangelism—Possibly here more than anywhere, the Puritans can help evangelicals who use the altar call and too readily pronounce people converted, simply because a decision^b for Christ has been recorded. One of the legacies of the Puritan era

^a **Mediator** – Jesus Christ in His role as a go-between; the One Who intervenes between two hostile parties, God and man, for the purpose of restoring them to a relationship of harmony and unity. See Free Grace Broadcaster 183, *Christ the Mediator*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Intercessor – Jesus Christ in His role as One Who pleads with someone in authority (God the Father) on behalf of someone else (men) (Heb 7:25).

^b See *Decisional Regeneration* by James Adams, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

is a stable doctrine of divine sovereignty and human responsibility to insure against the errors of Arminianism,^a on the one hand, and Hyper-Calvinism^b on the other.

Reconstructionism—This is a movement emanating out of America that stresses the importance of the Moral Law. It holds to a postmillennial position which foresees that Christianity will prevail to the point where civil governments around the world will become Christian. Reconstructionism stresses the application of biblical teaching to every facet of life, private and public, and by exposition of the Scriptures seeks to equip politicians to apply biblical law to public life. Puritanism would endorse the emphasis on the Ten Commandments, and the need to persuade and teach politicians to apply these commandments in legislation. However, the Puritans would part company with any who sought to follow “theonomy,” the application of Old Testament laws to public life. With regard to the future, as has already been pointed out, the Puritans varied. They were mostly postmillennial, but their optimism was centered in the transforming power of the gospel and the building up of churches, rather than preoccupation with the powers of civil government.

Broad evangelicalism—Broad evangelicalism is innocuous^c and no threat to the world, to sin, or the devil. The Puritans exercised spiritual power. They brought down the opposition of darkness. The English Puritans gave to England high views of the Christian family and the Lord’s Day. Allied also to broad evangelicalism is impotent scholarship that is undisciplined and effete.^d

Allied too to broad evangelicalism is shallow evangelism. In a recent book *Are You Really Born Again? Understanding True and False Conversion*,^e Kent Philpott testifies how he has moved in his ministry from shallow evangelistic practice, with its altar call, to Reformed and Puritan practice. With regard to scholarship, the Puritans were full of practical application. Sadly, often where we find substantial evangelical scholarship today, it can be lacking in the area of application.

Calvinistic Sovereign Grace-ism—Some readers may wonder what this is. The fact is that many churches disown the description “reformed” because they disagree with the Law and Lord’s Day chapters (chapters 19 and 21) in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* or its Baptist counterpart *The 1689 London Confession of Faith*.^f They em-

^a **Arminianism** – doctrinal system taught by Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), Dutch theologian of the Netherlands. He rejected the Reformers’ understanding of salvation by God’s sovereign election, teaching instead that God’s election of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will. See *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* by J. I. Packer, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b **Hyper-Calvinism** – belief that God’s election of His people negates Christ’s “Great Commission” commands for Christians to make disciples of all nations by evangelizing everywhere (Mat 28:19-20, etc.). See *The Killing Effects of Hyper-Calvinism*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c **innocuous** – having no adverse effect; harmless.

^d **effete** – depleted of vitality, force, or effectiveness.

^e Published by Evangelical Press, www.epbooks.org.

^f *London Baptist Confession of 1689*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

brace the five points of Calvinism. These five points are easily remembered by the acrostic TULIP: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints.^a This formulation originated at the Synod of Dort in Holland in 1618-19.^b

The five points highlight the truth that we are saved by grace alone. There are, however, dangers in a simplistic reduction of Calvinism to five points. In Scripture, wherever the truth of salvation by grace alone is stated, it is in the context of practical application. Without spiritual application there is the danger of being merely academic or intellectual. This was largely characteristic of Fundamentalism. As with other groupings of churches, Sovereign Grace churches vary widely in character. A few have fallen prey to a cultic spirit by implying that only those who believe in the five points are true, born-again Christians. Puritanism corrects such error by keeping to the biblical centrality of union with Christ as the main feature of the Christian, a union that brings with it, at one and the same time, justification imputed^c and holiness of life shown by fruitfulness (Rom 6:1-18). The Puritans were careful not to add to justification by faith alone. In some instances, “Calvinistic Sovereign Grace-ism” adds to justification by faith by insisting that a true believer one must possess the five points. But faith alone joins the believer to Christ (Rom 5:1). To that nothing must be added.

Hyper-Calvinism—The essence of Hyper-Calvinism is to deny common grace of the love of God to all men. In other words, God only loves the elect and only hates the non-elect. Further, Hyper-Calvinism denies the sincere free offers of the gospel to all men. C. H. Spurgeon^d was a Puritan in every fiber of his being. In his preaching we have wonderful examples of the five points of Calvinism preached evangelistically. For instance, Spurgeon poured scorn on a general redemption that supposedly made salvation possible but does not in fact actually save anyone. Spurgeon preached particular redemption^e in a most powerful evangelistic manner. The Puritans can provide stability today

- in the biblical manner in which they held to the different facets of the love of God, and
- in the way in which they held in harmony the doctrines of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

^a See *The Doctrines of Grace in the Gospel of John*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b See *The Canons of Dort*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c **imputed** – given by God apart from men’s works; put onto one’s account apart from one’s earning it.

^d **Charles H. Spurgeon** (1834-1892) – influential English Baptist minister who preached weekly to 6,000 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London; his collected sermons fill 63 volumes. CHAPEL LIBRARY makes available more than 250 Spurgeon tracts, booklets, and paperbacks.

^e **particular redemption** – doctrine that Christ died for a particular group of people, the elect chosen by God before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4-7), thus rendering His redemption effectual in every instance. See *Particular Redemption* by Charles Spurgeon, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

The Church of Christ on earth at the end of the 20th century is larger and more diverse than it has ever been. Only some aspects and strands of that huge body have been referred to, yet from these descriptions it should be evident that the Puritan writings are relevant today.

Popular Chart of English Monarchs 1491-1689

The Tudor line

HENRY VIII (born 1491, 1509-1547) *key: Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Survived*

- Dv wife number one Catherine of Aragon, who bore Mary, later to become queen
- B wife number two Anne Boleyn, who in 1533 bore Elizabeth, later to become queen.
- D wife number three Jane Seymour, who bore Edward, later to become king
- Dv wife number four Anne of Cleves, marriage supposedly not consummated
- B wife number five Catherine Howard
- S wife number six Catherine Parr

EDWARD VI (1537-1553) died at age 16. During his reign England moved politically in the direction of Protestantism.

MARY (1553-1558) nicknamed 'Bloody Mary' because of her cruelty. Burned about 270 at stake for their faith. Mary married Roman Catholic Philip son of Emperor Charles V in 1554.

ELIZABETH (1558-1603) principal events:

- 1559 The *Elizabethan Settlement*
- 1570 Elizabeth excommunicated by the Pope of Rome
- 1588 Attack by the Spanish Armada

The Stuart line

JAMES I (1603-1625)

- 1604 The Hampton Court Conference
- 1611 Publication of the King James Bible (Authorised Version)
- 1618 The Synod of Dort rejects Arminianism
- 1624 Richard Montagu's anti-Calvinist treatise points to the rise of Arminianism

CHARLES I (1603-1640)

- 1629 For eleven years Charles rules without Parliament
- 1637 Imposition of new *Prayer Book* provokes riots in Edinburgh
- 1640-1660 Rule by Parliament
- 1642 Civil War
- 1643-1647 The Westminster Assembly
- 1645 Archbishop William Laud executed
- 1649 Charles I executed
- 1658 Death of Oliver Cromwell

CHARLES II (1660-1685)

- 1662 *Act of Uniformity* and the Great Ejection of Puritan pastors

JAMES II (1685-1688)

WILLIAM III (1689-1702)

PART ONE

THE STORY OF THE PURITANS

1. Overview

“Almost no one reads their writings now.” So wrote William Haller in his 1957 book, *The Rise of Puritanism*. His comment was true then. It is not true now. Since 1957 there has taken place a Reformed theological renewal that has its roots in Puritan books.¹ In addition to the extensive publishing achievement of the Banner of Truth in the UK and Soli Deo Gloria^a publishers in the USA, there are other publishing houses in the business of reworking and publishing the Puritans.^b

Included in the republication of Puritan writings is the translation of Puritan expositions in other languages. For instance, Jeremiah Burroughs’ *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*^c has recently been published in Albanian, Arabic, French, Indonesian, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, and Spanish.² The need for a popular historical background into which we can readily set the Puritan authors is one of the reasons for this presentation.

I would urge newcomers to the Puritans to memorize the names and dates of the English monarchs for the 16th and 17th centuries. The time grid is essential. Each monarch put his or her own peculiar stamp on that part of the story. Compared to the monarchy today, the kings and queens of that era seemed to wield supreme authority. In fact their powers were ill-defined. He/she had no standing army, was often short of money, and had to govern bearing in mind the goodwill of the land-owning classes, who were the natural leaders in society.

In his *A Short History of the English People*, J. R. Green declared,

No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth to the meeting of the Long Parliament (1640-1660). England became the people of a book, and that book the Bible.³

This may sound exaggerated, but we can be sure that what Green meant is that the Puritans eventually came to wield a spiritual influence well beyond their proportion, for they always formed a minority. It will help to see the story in perspective by re-

^a Now part of Reformation Heritage Books, www.HeritageBooks.org.

^b This Part One, *The Story of the Puritans*, is available as a shorter booklet from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c Abridgement available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

calling that the population of England in the year 1500 was about two million and in 1600 approximately four million. As for religion, in spite of enforced church attendance, it is doubtful whether more than a quarter of the population of England during that period could be said to have any religion at all.⁴ It is interesting to observe that the population of England is now about 49 million^a and has 13,000 parishes with 10,000 clergy, 8,000 of whom are paid. This general observation needs to be remembered not only for the whole time that we will be viewing, but even more so today, when those who profess and practice the Christian faith constitute probably less than ten percent. Ralph Josselin in his Essex parish did not celebrate communion for nine years, and when he did in 1651, only 34 qualified! Josselin spoke of three categories of parishioners: first, those who seldom hear preaching; second, those who are “sleepy hearers”; and third, “our society,” a small group of the godly.⁵

Nominalism^b has always characterized the great majority of Anglicans. It was so then as it is now. By about 1600, the number of Puritan ministers had increased to about ten percent; that is about 800 of the 8,000 Church of England clergy. By 1660 this proportion had increased to about twenty-five percent. Then, between 1660 and 1662, about 2,000 were forced out of the National Church.⁶

Before the Reformation, the English Church was Roman Catholic. In character, it was “a collection of practices, habits, and attitudes rather than an intellectually coherent body of doctrine.”⁷ The Protestantization of England was essentially gradual, taking place slowly throughout Elizabeth’s reign, “here a little and there a little,” and very much in piecemeal fashion. From about 1600 growth accelerated. At the time of Henry VIII’s breach with Rome, England was officially completely Roman Catholic. But by 1642, it is estimated that not more than two percent were Catholic, but ten percent of the peerage^c was still so. Throughout the period I will outline, England was a sacral society; everyone was required to conform to the Church of England. This resulted in “recusants” who refused to attend the Church of England services, either for Puritan reasons or out of loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. From 1570 to 1791, this was punishable by a fine and involved many civil disabilities. Recusants tended to lie low and keep out of trouble. It was during the period 1640 to 1660 that Christian denominations surfaced: Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers^d (all these

^a As of 2000, the date of writing.

^b **nominalism** – outward profession of faith without heart commitment; false profession; “easy-believism.”

^c **peerage** – body of nobility of a country.

^d **Presbyterians** – form of church practice consisting of baptism of infants and elders in each local church, under the authority of a presbytery composed of elders from multiple like-minded churches that have covenanted together.

Congregationalists – form of church practice that combines the Presbyterian baptism of infants and the Baptist teaching that each local church is self-governing under Christ’s authority.

together representing only about five percent of the population).⁸ The *Toleration Act* of 1689 marked the end of the Church of England's claim to be *the* single all-inclusive church of the English people, although it remained the church established by law.

2. Who Were the Puritans?

In 1568 there were “many congregations of the Anabaptists in London, who called themselves ‘Puritans’ or ‘the unspotted lambs of the Lord.’”⁹ It has been widely accepted that the word *Puritan* first came into use in connection with these groups.¹⁰ It was during the Elizabethan period (1558-1603) that the Puritans grew increasingly as a distinct brotherhood of pastors who emphasized the great centralities of Christianity: faithfulness to Scripture, expository preaching, pastoral care, personal holiness, and practical godliness applied to every area of life. The word *Puritan* began to be used to refer to these people who were scrupulous about their way of life. “The ‘godly,’ or those who were not nominal, were dubbed *Puritans*.”¹¹ Those who cared about the gospel (gospellers) and who sought to propagate the gospel were Puritans. As the Scriptures warn, the godly can expect to bear reproach for their holy way of life. The godly of that time were derided as killjoys and nick-named *Puritans*.

A new meaning developed that came about through the Arminian/Calvinist controversy. Those ministers in England who subscribed to the doctrines of grace^a were called *Puritans*. When submitting a list of names for preferment (promotion), the dogmatic Arminian Archbishop William Laud^b placed a “P” beside the Puritans, thus warning against their convictions, and an “O” beside others for orthodox^c (as Laud interpreted that term), conveying the meaning that they were acceptable.

The word *Puritan* has been used much as a term of derision. In 1641, Henry Parker complained that

Papists, bishops, court flatterers, stage-poets, minstrels, jesting buffoons, all the shameless rout of drunkards, lechers, and swearing ruffians, and many others took delight in deriding people as Puritans.¹²

Baptists – form of church practice embracing believers’ baptism and independent local congregations under Christ’s authority, although such churches may associate with like-minded others for specific, non-binding purposes such as evangelistic outreach and fellowship.

Quakers – form of church practice with a primary focus on Inner Light, direct illumination from God, which they elevate to a place of spiritual authority, superior even to Scripture.

^a **doctrines of grace** – name given to the system of theology usually known as Calvinism, which emphasizes that salvation is all of grace, by the merit of Christ alone, absolutely without any addition from the works of man, either in an unregenerate or regenerate state. See *God’s Astounding Grace* by D. Scott Meadows; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b **William Laud** (1573-1645) – English churchman and academic, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633 (head of the Church of England). In theology, Laud was accused of being an Arminian and opponent of Calvinism, as well as covertly favouring Roman Catholic doctrines. On all three grounds, he was regarded by Puritan clerics and laymen as a dangerous opponent.

^c **orthodox** – that which pertains to the body of doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith; this implies consistency with the revelation of Holy Scripture in belief and worship.

3. The Puritan Movement in Time

We will tell the story of the Puritans in three parts:

- A. Antecedents^a to the Puritan movement
- B. The development of the Puritan movement
through the spiritual brotherhood (1558-1603)
- C. The full flowering of Puritanism (1603-1662)

A. *Antecedents to the Puritan Movement*

1). *William Tyndale and the Supremacy of the Bible*

The first feature of the Puritan movement was a love for the Word of God. Before the rise of Puritanism, ignorance of the Word of God was widespread. In 1524 William Tyndale (c. 1495-1536) made a brave decision to defy the law forbidding Bible translation and the law forbidding Englishmen to leave the country without permission.

Born in Gloucestershire, Tyndale was educated at Oxford, where he gained his MA in 1515. Thereafter he came into conflict with the local clergy who avowed their loyalty to the Pope and tradition in preference to the teachings of the Bible. Tyndale was appalled by the prevailing ignorance and, in an argument with an opponent, asserted in the home of his patron Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury in Gloucestershire,

If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause that a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost!

On the Continent, Tyndale was hounded from one place to another. Eventually he was betrayed, and suffered in prison. At Vilvorde, near Brussels, in 1536 he was put to death by strangling and burning. Thus ended the life of one of England's greatest heroes.

William Tyndale was a talented theologian. His theological writings were gathered and published in 1572. Tyndale's work represents a formative contribution in the development of Protestant Christianity, especially on the central issue of justification by faith alone, by grace alone. This can be seen in a competent reply made to Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), English Lord Chancellor, who wrote books against Tyndale.

Tyndale succeeded in translating and printing the New Testament plus the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah. These were smuggled back into England. The ex-friar Miles Coverdale (1488-1568), an associate of Tyndale's, turned to Switzerland for protection. There, using Tyndale's work, he translated the whole Bible. Henry VIII approved this translation. By 1537 two editions had been published in England. Later, the 1560 Geneva Bible became a favorite Bible with the Puritans. Between 1579 and 1615 at least 39 editions of the Geneva Bible were printed in England. A predestinarian catechism was included in the Geneva Bible and there were marginal notes.¹³ For instance, the locusts of Revelation 9:3 were identified as bishops and archbishops, monks and cardinals!¹⁴

^a **antecedents** – that which has gone before in time, leading to the current state.

2). *Role of the Martyrs and the Crucial Ministry of John Foxe*

During the short reign of Edward (1547-1553), the Protestant position was consolidated. At the death of Queen Mary (1553-1558), England was technically re-aligned with Rome. It was during the reign of Mary, nick-named “Bloody Mary,” that more than 270 Protestant martyrs were burned at the stake. Included among these were artisans and ordinary people. Among those put to death for their faith were leaders of great stature like John Bradford, as well as distinguished bishops including John Hooper, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury.^a

Thus, under Mary, some of England’s noblest sons lost their lives. The gruesome scenes of human bodies burning alive were etched into the minds of the people; they must be the primary influence molding the Puritans who followed from 1558 to 1662 and beyond. The effect of this to turn the people from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism is beyond calculation. During her reign, Mary was Rome’s greatest asset in England. Since her death, her memory has always been Rome’s greatest liability in England.¹⁵

The testimony of the martyrs was extraordinary. Their impact was greatly increased through the writing industry^b of John Foxe. Born in Lancashire in 1517, Foxe began studies at Oxford at age 16. His studies were instrumental in his conversion by the time he had earned his MA. Because of his Protestant convictions, Foxe suffered acute poverty. Scholars in those days depended on wealthy patrons to give them lodging and meals in exchange for teaching services. Unable to find such a position in London, Foxe nearly starved to death. One day he sat disconsolate in St Paul’s churchyard. A stranger came up to him and placed a generous sum of money in his hands. Three days later, he obtained a position in the home of the Earl of Surrey at Reigate, where he taught the Earl’s children.

When Mary came to the throne, Foxe left for the Continent, where he joined English refugees—first at Frankfurt and then at Basel. He had already begun to collect materials for his work on the martyrs from the time of the apostles to the martyrs under the reign of Queen Mary. Foxe’s work eventually expanded to 1,700 folio^c pages. Foxe was essentially a literary man, meticulous in detail. His reliability for accuracy has been questioned but not refuted. A much expanded *Book of Martyrs* was published in 1570. It was placed in the cathedrals and in parish churches and in the halls of public companies. Never had such a work on such a scale appeared in English before, certainly never at such a moment. Daniel Neal declares,

No book ever gave such a mortal wound to popery^d as this. It was dedicated to the queen; and was in such high reputation that it was ordered to be set up in the church-

^a **Archbishop of Canterbury** – senior bishop and principal leader of the Church of England. (The reigning monarch of the UK is the “supreme governor.”)

^b **industry** – energetic devotion to a task or an endeavor; diligence.

^c **folio** – book with pages of the largest size.

^d **popery** – devotion to the Pope; Roman Catholicism.

es, where it raised in the people an invincible horror and detestation of that religion which had shed so much innocent blood.¹⁶

Along with the Bible, Foxe's *Martyrs* became a family book in many homes.¹⁷

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was the principal practical means of turning England to Protestantism. The powerful testimony of the Marian martyrs in their agonizing deaths moved hearts and turned minds to consider the reasons that inspired such faith. In addition, Foxe's writing was used to instill into Puritanism the ideal of the Christian hero: the person who bears faithful witness to Christ, even to death. It was glorious to them that the martyrs could triumph over the last and most dreaded enemy. Dying well was part of the Puritan mentality. We see this in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*^a description of the various characters who come to cross the River of Death. Remember Mr. Despondency? His last words were: "Farewell night, welcome day!"

Foxe immortalized the dying sayings of the martyrs, such as Bishop Hugh Latimer's words to Bishop Ridley when they suffered together at the stake:

Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as, I trust, shall never be put out!

A memorial stands at the spot in Oxford where this took place.

John Foxe inspired and promoted the idea of England as an elect^b nation, a people set apart from all others, a people specially called to preserve and promote the Word of God.¹⁸

3). *The Lutheran and Genevan Reformation Movements*

Momentum for reform came to England from the writings and example of the Continental Reformers as a whole. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the dominant early influence, but later John Calvin (1509-1564) exercised a profound effect in England. Calvin's style of preaching straight through text by text, book after book in Scripture, and his example of reformation at Geneva impressed the English refugees. There were about one hundred English refugees in Geneva at the time of Mary's reign of terror. These refugees caught the vision for the complete reformation of the Church in its form of government and its form of worship. Several of the refugees who returned at the time of Elizabeth's accession were given high and privileged office in the Established Church. To their disappointment, they realized that radical reform would be blocked.

In due course, the vision of a church reformed after the Genevan pattern and made Presbyterian was taken up by Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603), a popular teacher at Cambridge. Cartwright's lectures on the *Acts of the Apostles* in 1570 made a tremen-

^a *The Pilgrim's Progress* – classic Christian allegory written by John Bunyan (1628-1688) while he was imprisoned. First published in 1678, it has been in print continuously ever since. Some believe it to be the second best-selling English language book in the world after the Bible. Part One is available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b **elect** – chosen by God for special blessing and usefulness in the world.

dous impact and encouraged attempts to bring about reformation in church government. Two of his disciples, John Field and Thomas Wilcox, wrote in detail on this theme in 1572 under the title *An Admonition to Parliament*. This was forceful and uncompromising writing, but exceedingly unpopular with the government. Field and Wilcox soon found themselves in prison.

When Cartwright was challenged and charged with error, he answered by drawing up a statement that summarized the issues as follows:

1. Archbishops and archdeacons (the Episcopal system) ought to be abolished.
2. The officers of the church should be patterned on the New Testament model. Bishops,^a or elders, should preach and deacons take care of the poor.
3. Every church should be governed by its own minister and elders.
4. No man should solicit for ecclesiastical preferment.
5. Church officers should be chosen by the church and not the State.

B. The Development of the Puritan Movement until the Spiritual Brotherhood (1558-1603)

1). History

When Elizabeth rode into London on 23rd November 1558, she was twenty-five years old. Exceptional in her ability to measure political forces, she grasped well the emotions and desires of her people. More than any other Tudor monarch, she controlled both government and Church policy. She spoke Latin, French, and Italian fluently and could read Greek. Elizabeth resolved to work for the establishment of a strong united nation with one united National Church. William Cecil, Elizabeth's chief minister, believed that "the state could never be in safety where there was toleration of two religions."

At the time of Elizabeth's accession to the throne, the contest between Catholicism and Protestantism to win the hearts of the people was undecided. Most were ready to conform either way. Elizabeth's administration was moderately Protestant. She excluded fully committed Roman Catholics, but neither were there any Protestants from the Genevan camp. Elizabeth maintained a balance between the Roman Catholic and Protestant constituencies. Even in the matter of marriage she kept everyone guessing. Marriage to a foreign prince would have enormous political and religious implications. In any event, she never married. She was less violent than her half-sister Mary. Nevertheless, at least two Anabaptists^b were burned at the stake in 1575; and Separatist^a leaders such as Greenwood, Barrowe, and Penry were executed by hanging in 1593.

^a **Bishops** – New Testament title given to the church office of elders, spiritually mature men chosen to lead the local congregation (1Ti 3:1-11; Ti 1:5-9). See *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b **Anabaptists** – (*literally* "re-baptizer": Greek *ana* "again" and *baptizo* "baptize") originally a term of contempt during the Reformation for those who rejected infant baptism and established churches based on believers' baptism. German, Swiss, Polish, Dutch, and numerous other groups emerged, often with widely different theology.

The Pope excommunicated Queen Elizabeth in 1570. This strengthened opposition to the Pope and assisted the Protestant cause in England. In 1588 a massive effort was made by Spain to invade England. The Spanish Armada consisted of an impressive fleet of 130 ships intended to convey 50,000 soldiers as an attacking force. The Armada suffered an overwhelming defeat. Less than half the Spanish ships returned home. This event further strengthened the Protestant party in England, since the English then, as now, prize their nationhood. They resented the threat from Roman Catholic Spain, a nation notorious for the Inquisition,^b a most hideous and devilish system of persecution.

To appreciate the conditions under which the brotherhood of godly Puritan pastors labored, it is important to understand the *Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity* and the new *Prayer Book*, which were imposed upon England in 1559. The effect of the *Act of Supremacy* declared Elizabeth to be “Supreme Head of the Church of England.”

The way in which we worship God is a sensitive issue. It is not surprising that pressure for ministers to wear the surplice (a loose white over-garment) caused resentment. Most conformed for the sake of peace. Others refused. A Manchester curate^c preached that “the surplice is a rag of the pope and a mighty heresy in the church, and he who maintains it cannot be saved!” A minister appearing before the Bishop of Lichfield in 1570 called it “a polluted and cursed mark of the beast” and warned that thanks to the use of “such rags of antichrist, the people will fall away from God into a second popery that will be worse than the first!”¹⁹ The application of the laws enforcing conformity varied from place to place. Many bishops had little desire to persecute ministers who, after all, were fellow-Protestants.

2). Examples

The inception of the Puritan movement is found in a spiritual fellowship of gifted pastor/preachers that emerged in the 1580s and 1590s. Some of the best known were Richard Greenham, Henry Smith, Richard Rogers, Laurence Chaderton, Arthur Hildersam, John Dod, John Rogers, and William Perkins. Puritans multiplied through the work of these leaders, who became famous not only for their preaching but as physicians of the soul. I will describe briefly four leaders of that early brotherhood.²⁰

Firstly, there was *Richard Greenham (1531-1591)*. Greenham left the academic atmosphere of Cambridge, where he had been a tutor in 1570, to take up pastoral work in the humble village of Dry Drayton about five miles from Cambridge. There he labored

^a **Separatists** – English Christians in the 16th and 17th centuries who wished to separate from the Church of England and form independent local churches. They were influential politically under Oliver Cromwell, who was himself a separatist, and were eventually called Congregationalists.

^b **Inquisition** – group of institutions begun in the 12th century within the Roman Catholic Church whose aim was to combat heresy. Its scope significantly expanded in response to the Protestant Reformation, often using brutal interrogations and torture, and sentencing those “guilty” to death.

^c **curate** – cleric, especially one who has charge of a parish.

for twenty years, preaching away only occasionally. Greenham was a pastor *par excellence*, a spiritual physician able to discern the deep experiences of the soul, an expert in counselling and comforting. He constantly rose, winter and summer, at 4 am. He refused several lucrative promotions and abounded in acts of generosity to the poor.

Young men came to live at Dry Drayton, forming a “School of Christ,” devoting themselves to the Scriptures and to the outworking of the Word in their own souls and the souls of others. Why should a village situation be exciting? The answer is that here we see a microcosm^a of a wider work—the rooting of the gospel in rural England. Richard Greenham was criticized for his non-conformity^b and the manner in which he conducted worship services. He was passive in his resistance. He did not wish to argue about things he regarded as *adiaphora*, that is, things indifferent (Rom 14:5). He preached Christ and Him crucified, and simply pleaded for tolerance that he should continue to be a faithful minister of Christ. He enjoyed the friendship of men of influence, who always managed to put in a good word for him and thus keep him out of trouble.

Secondly, there was *Richard Rogers (1550-1620)*. In 1574 Richard Rogers became a preacher of God’s Word in the village of Wethersfield. There he labored for the conversion of souls, but also to work at mortification of sin^c in his own soul. Like Greenham, he kept a school in his house for young men.

Having first committed himself to the rigors of the godly life, he wrote in detail on practical godly living. This was called *The Seven Treatises*, a work that went through seven editions before 1630. His close friend and neighbor, Ezekiel Culverwell, expressed the wish that readers of the book could have seen its author’s practice with their own eyes and heard his doctrine with their own ears. Here we see illustrated a fascination with the essence of godliness. Rogers kept a diary; from it can be seen a man walking as closely as possible with God. One of his series of expositions gained fame, namely, discourses on the book of Judges.²¹

We should not imagine that Rogers led an easy life, being waited on by servants so that he could give himself to spiritual exercises. Besides the care of his immediate large family, we read of him,

He did regard it as his duty to meditate, study, and write. But at the same time, he carried on no less conscientiously the activities of a householder, a farmer, a figure in the countryside, a preacher, a pastor, a reformer, and the head of a boarding school.

^a **microcosm** – small, representative system having analogies to a larger system in constitution, configuration, or development.

^b **non-conformity** – refusal to accept or conform to the doctrines, usage, or polity of 16th and 17th century Church of England.

^c **mortification** – putting temptation of sin to death in its influence (Col 3:5).

See *Mortification of Sin* by John Owen (1616-1683) and Free Grace Broadcaster 201, *Mortification*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Thirdly, there was *William Perkins (1558-1602)*. Perkins labored at Cambridge with remarkable effect. Combined in him, to a remarkable extent, were the spiritual qualities and ministerial skills typical of the brotherhood. He excelled both in the pulpit and with the pen, keeping the university printer busy with many books. More than those of any other minister of his time, his published works were found on the shelves of the generation that followed him. He was the first to write a full exposition on the subject of preaching in *The Art of Prophesying*.²² Typical of the Puritans, Perkins' approach to preaching was essentially applicatory. In preparation, he considered the needs of every kind of hearer in the congregation. Although he died so young, his writings exceeded in quantity and quality all other Puritan authors up to that time.

William Perkins was no ivory tower academic. For example, he made it his business to obtain permission to minister to the prisoners in jail. He won souls to Christ from among them just as he did among the huge crowds who came to hear him preach at St. Andrews. It is said of him that his sermons were, at one and the same time, all Law and all gospel: all Law to expose the shame of sin, and all gospel to offer a full and free pardon for lost sinners. His was an awakening ministry that stirred lost souls to see the reality of eternal condemnation. Perkins was so gifted in eloquence, it was said that the very way he uttered the word *damn* made sinners tremble. Perkins died young. His loss was sorely felt.

Fourthly, there was *Laurence Chaderton (1537-1635)*. Laurence Chaderton lived to be almost a hundred years old. He published little. He came from a wealthy Roman Catholic family by which he was "nuzzled up in popish superstition." He suffered disinheritance when he embraced the gospel and Puritanism. A well-known benefactor of that time was Sir Walter Mildmay, who founded Emmanuel College at the University of Cambridge. Sir Walter chose Chaderton to be master of that college,^a which position he filled for forty years. He was a lecturer for fifty years at St. Clement's Church, Cambridge. When he eventually came to give up his lectureship at St. Clement's, forty ministers begged him to continue, claiming that they owed their conversion to his ministry. There is a description of him preaching for two hours when he announced that he would no longer trespass on his hearers' patience; whereupon the congregation cried out, "For God's sake, sir, go on! Go on!"

The growth of Puritanism was due to pastors of this kind, whose lives and godly example captured the imagination of many. However, as we have seen in the case of William Perkins and Laurence Chaderton, the role of Cambridge University was tremendous in advancing Puritanism. Puritan endowed colleges such as Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex produced a steady supply of talented Puritan pastors and preachers.

^a **college** – one of several academic and social schools within a larger university. Each college provided its students with lodging, board, social activities, faculty, and specific studies.

master – head administrator and director of faculty and policy.

3). *Other Factors*

In tracing the rise of Puritanism, we must reckon too with the role of lectureships. In market towns, magistrates engaged their own preachers and organized weekday sermons. Lectureships were established that were a means of by-passing the system of conformity to the *Prayer Book* and church ceremonial, which were required of all official parish ministers. Richard Rogers of Wethersfield and Henry Smith at St. Clement Danes in London officially acted as lecturers. Between 1560 and 1662, at least 700 clergymen held lectureships at one time or another in London. Of these, at least 60 percent were Puritans.²³ The patronage of nobles and gentry played an important role in the advance of the Puritan movements. Wealthy patrons supported and protected Puritan preachers.

During Elizabeth's reign, the place of prophesyings loomed large. These were meetings for preaching expository sermons and discussion, which became very popular. Elizabeth felt threatened and sought to suppress the prophesyings. Archbishop Edmund Grindal refused to carry out her will and argued in favor of the prophesyings. For his faithfulness, he was suspended from office for the last seven years of his life, and confined to his house for most of that time. In May 1577, the queen herself sent letters to the bishops ordering them to suppress the prophesying meetings.

C. *The Full Flowering of Puritanism (1603-1662)*

This period from 1603 to 1662 was turbulent, a time when conflict between Crown and Parliament came to a climax in the civil war. Religious pluralism^a surfaced in the 1640s. The story of the Puritans reached its apex in this period, especially as is seen in the Westminster Assembly. It is vital to know the history, which we will now sketch in five phases:

1. James I
2. Charles I and Archbishop Laud
3. Civil war and the rise of Oliver Cromwell
4. Puritan ascendancy
5. Restoration of the monarchy and decline of Puritanism.

1). James I

Elizabeth I died in 1603. She had purposed to make England great, and in that she saw success to considerable measure. Despite her personal tantrums, sulks, and irrationalities, her reign was a period of political stability, especially so in the light of what was to follow in the mid-17th century. As already noted, at the beginning of the 17th century, the Puritans represented about ten percent of the body of Church of England clergy.

The Puritans fostered high hopes that James (James VI of Scotland, James I of England), coming from Presbyterian Scotland, would herald Church reform. They were

^a **pluralism** – condition in which numerous distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural groups are present and tolerated within a society.

sadly disappointed. A petition known as the *Millenary Petition*, believed to represent about 1,000 Puritans, was presented to James I on his way from Scotland to London. This petition urged reformation and led to the conference known as the Hampton Court Conference. This took place on three separate days in January, 1604, at Hampton Palace in London.

James was highly intelligent. He understood well the intricacies of Church government. He believed in the “divine right of kings,” that is, to disobey the king is to disobey God. James had every intention of maintaining supreme power, having had enough of cantankerous Presbyterians in Scotland! It was clear as daylight that the Puritans wished to “Presbyterianize” the Church of England. As the Hampton Court Conference went on, so King James became more and more bad tempered. He made dogmatic assertions such as, “No bishop,^a no king!” and “Presbytery agrees as much with monarchy as God with the devil!” And to the Puritan divines^b he said, “You had better hurry up and conform, or you will be harried out of the land!” The conference ended in a right royal flurry of bad temper! However, the King was agreeable to a new translation of the Bible known as *The Authorized Version* (or King James Version), which was completed in 1611. Otherwise, concessions were few and insignificant.

Between 1604 and 1609, about eighty clergy were deprived of their livings for their non-conformity, most of these before 1607. The bishops had been told to persuade rather than coerce subscription to Anglican practice. In Parliament, the godly campaigned for the reinstatement of deprived ministers.²⁴

King James sent delegates to Dort. Held in 1618-19 in the Netherlands, the Synod of Dort is an important event in the history of the Christian Church. The conference affirmed the orthodox Calvinist position on the sovereignty of God^c over against the tenets of Arminianism. James supported the Calvinist position against the Arminians. Subsequently, he became ambivalent on the issue. In 1624 Richard Montagu published an anti-Calvinist treatise with the title *A New Gagg for an Old Goose*. This was part of an increasing trend toward Arminianism in the National Church.²⁵

2). *Charles I and Archbishop Laud*

James I died in 1625. Charles I—handsome, dignified, chaste—was enthroned king. However, unlike Elizabeth and his father James, he lacked political skill and especially so in the art of keeping checks and balances, which is essential in politics. Charles married Henrietta Maria, sister of the reigning French king Louis XIII. Maria was an ardent Roman Catholic. She meddled with state affairs. This created constant suspicion among members of Parliament and in the nation. These suspicions were mixed with

^a **bishop** – church office in some denominations. In the Church of England, head of multiple parishes.

^b **divines** – theologically learned men.

^c See the Christian classic, *The Sovereignty of God* by A. W. Pink (1886-1952), available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

fear as the cause of Protestantism on the continent of Europe was receding, which placed many Protestants in danger.

William Laud became Charles' trusted adviser. From the time of the accession of Charles to the throne in 1625, Laud was exercising power, but this was formalized when he became the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. James had warned Charles that Laud did not understand the Scottish people: "He kenned^a not the stomach of that people." This was a warning that Charles did not heed. Laud was hostile in every way to the Puritan teaching. One of his first acts as archbishop was to encourage games and pastimes on the Lord's Day, which antagonized the Puritans. He was an avowed Arminian, with its emphasis on free will and rejection of predestination. Laud was superstitious. He embraced the outward forms of Roman Catholic worship, but rejected the authority of the Pope. His idea of what he called "The Beauty of Holiness" (Psa 29:2) consisted of rituals and ceremonies. To this day, many Anglican churches have altars at the east end. Although the Canon law^b always refers to "the holy table,"^c the idea of the altar is perpetuated. The message of an altar is that of sacrifice. Laud believed the altar was "the greatest place of God's residence upon earth—yea, greater than the pulpit."²⁶

The famous historian Lord Thomas Macaulay (who did not comprehend the spirituality of the Puritans) certainly had the measure of William Laud and wrote of him,

Of all the prelates of the Anglican Church, Laud had departed farthest from the principles of the Reformation, and had drawn nearest to Rome...He was by nature rash, irritable, quick to feel for his own dignity, slow to sympathize with the sufferings of others, and prone to the error (common in superstitious men) of mistaking his own peevish and malignant moods for emotions of pious zeal. Under his direction, every corner of the realm was subjected to a constant and minute^d inspection. Every little congregation of separatists was tracked out and broken up.²⁷

Macaulay's hyperbole accurately depicts the zeal of the persecutors, but we can be thankful that by no means all separatist assemblies were broken up.

As archbishop, Laud wielded power to arrest and imprison those who would not conform. He used a court called "the Star Chamber" to interrogate and persecute. An example of the cruelty of Laud is seen in the case of a Dr. Alexander Leighton, father of the well known bishop Robert Leighton. Without any defense or right of appeal, Leighton was sent to Newgate Prison. When brought before an arbitrary court, he was condemned to have his ears cut off, his nose slit on both sides, be branded in the face with a double S S (sower of sedition), be twice whipped, be placed in the pillory,^e and then be subject to life imprisonment! When this outrageous sentence was pronounced, Laud

^a **kenned** – knew.

^b **Canon law** – body of rules governing the faith and practice of members of the Church of England.

^c **holy table** – place where the Lord's Supper is served; communion table.

^d **minute** – detailed.

^e **pillory** – wooden framework on a post with holes for the head and hands, in which offenders were formerly locked to be exposed to public scorn as punishment.

gave thanks to God!²⁸ Other well-known characters who received similar barbaric treatment were William Prynne, John Bastwick, Henry Burton, and John Lilburne.

Bitter persecution was waged against the Puritans. Between 1629 and 1640, 20,000 men, women, and children left for New England, including seventy-nine ministers, twenty-eight of whom returned when conditions improved at home.²⁹ Many made their exodus through the Netherlands. Among the most famous leaders to settle in New England were Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, and Thomas Shepard. The role of William Ames (1576-1633) is noteworthy. He was a Puritan whose principal ministry was exercised in Holland, but his writings were very popular in New England. *The Marrow of Theology* was his most influential book.

Charles ruled the country without Parliament from 1629 to 1640. Administration was maintained through county courts. Political power lay largely in the hands of about 60 noblemen or peers, very wealthy aristocrats who owned most of the land. Below them were the gentry. When the Civil War began in earnest in 1642, peers and gentry were about evenly divided in their loyalties to the king.

3). *Civil War and the Rise of Oliver Cromwell*

When Laud attempted to enforce the Church of England's *Prayer Book* and *Liturgy* on (Presbyterian) Scotland in 1638, it was like striking a match to dry gunpowder! This is highlighted by a famous incident in St. Giles Church, Edinburgh. Jenny Geddes, infuriated by a pompous dean in a white surplice walking down the aisle to announce the reading, took hold of her stool and hurled it at him! In today's idiom, she cried out, "You miserable upstart! Will you say mass in my ear?" Jenny's example greatly heartened others to resist imposition of popish rituals that they hated. In 1638 Charles mobilized an army to subdue Scotland, but the English army was soundly defeated, and in 1639 a truce was negotiated.

Tensions between Parliament and the king increased. Demonstrations in London against royal authority and popery were quickly put down. The king tried to assert his own authority over Parliament. On January 4th, 1642, with a band of armed men, he entered the House of Commons in order to arrest the leader of Parliament, John Pym, and four other leaders. This backfired. The five had been forewarned. Just in time, they escaped by barge down the River Thames and hid in the city. This action by the king incited much more opposition to himself. A revolution was brewing. For his own safety, Charles was obliged to leave London. By May 1642, he had set up his headquarters in York.

The first battle of the Civil War, which ensued, took place at Edgehill in October 1642. This resulted in a draw. At first there seemed to be a balance of power between the Royalists (Cavaliers) and the parliamentary forces (Roundheads). In an attempt to break what was a military deadlock, Parliament signed the *Solemn League and Covenant* with the Scots.

In January 1644, a Scottish army crossed the border. In July 1644, the Battle of Marston Moor was fought and won by the combined armies of Scotland, Yorkshire (led

by Sir Thomas Fairfax), and the Eastern Association, led by Oliver Cromwell and the Earl of Manchester. It was Oliver Cromwell's role and success in this battle that created his military reputation, and won his soldiers the nickname "Ironsides."

This victory was not followed up. Some of the Parliamentary leaders, especially the Earl of Essex, were weak and indecisive. Parliament realized that a more determined and resolute leadership was needed. Victory could not be achieved without better generals and the reorganization of the army. Cromwell blamed one of the leaders, the Earl of Manchester, for retreating instead of attacking the enemy. Manchester made a reply that is very revealing, because it shows what was at stake if the Roundheads were to lose this war to the Cavaliers:

If we beat the King 99 times, yet he is King still, and his posterity; and we are his subjects still. But if the King beat us *once*, we should be hanged and our posterity undone.

In 1645 the army was reorganized as the New Model Army. The commander-in-chief was Sir Thomas Fairfax, only thirty three years old. His cavalry general was Cromwell. In the Civil War battles from this point forward, it was Cromwell's military discipline and strategies that proved decisive. Lord Macaulay describes Oliver Cromwell as one who feared God and was zealous for public liberty. He writes,

With such men he filled his own regiment, and, while he subjected them to a discipline more rigid than had ever before been known in England, he administered to their intellectual and moral nature stimulants of fearful potency...Fairfax, a brave soldier, but of mean^a understanding and irresolute temper, was the nominal Lord General of the forces; but Cromwell was their real head...Cromwell made haste to organize the whole army on the same principles on which he had organized his own regiment...That which chiefly distinguished the army of Cromwell from other armies was the austere morality and the fear of God that pervaded all ranks. It is acknowledged by the most zealous Royalists that, in their singular camp, no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen, and that during the long dominion of the soldiery, the property of the peaceable citizen and the honour of women were held sacred.³⁰

Cromwell surrounded himself with men of prayer. He led his men into battle. He possessed an astonishing ability to measure the morale of his soldiers and knew just the right moment to strike for victory. Cromwell fought many battles and never lost one. When we remember that he did not train in a military academy but was his own architect in warfare, he must go down as one of the greatest generals of all time. Roman Catholic author Lady Antonia Fraser in her biography³¹ says of Cromwell as a strategist:

To achieve what was necessary to do, and achieve it perfectly, is a rare distinction—whatever the scale. It is that which gives to Cromwell, him too, the right to be placed in the hall of fame.

^a **mean** – common.

4). *The Puritan Ascendancy*

Archbishop Laud was imprisoned by Parliament in 1641 and executed for treason by beheading at the Tower of London in January 1645. Government of the Church by bishops was abolished in 1646. Progressive victory for Parliament in the war brought a new set of problems. There was a division in Parliament between the Presbyterians and the Independents. The Presbyterian majority in Parliament disliked and feared the army in which the Independents dominated. There was unrest in the army due to unpaid wages. In 1647, Charles negotiated a secret treaty with the Scots, which led to a renewal of civil war. Charles' duplicity led to the army bringing him to trial, and on January 1649 he was executed as a traitor to the Commonwealth of England.

Charles II was recognized in Scotland. The army supporting him was defeated by Cromwell at the battle of Dunbar in 1650. Exactly a year later, armies in favor of Charles II were routed by Cromwell at Worcester. That victory for Parliament ended the Civil War. Charles II escaped to France. Cromwell became the Lord Protector and ruled through Parliament. He was a firm believer in religious liberty—and was in that respect ahead of his times.

On 12 June 1643, Parliament passed an ordinance calling for an assembly of learned and godly divines for the settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England. On 1 July the Westminster Assembly convened, the first of 1,163 meetings until February 1649. There were 151 nominated members, 121 of whom were divines, and 30 laymen. The Assembly completed the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* and the *Directory of Public Worship*.^a The influence of these materials, particularly the *Confession*, on subsequent generations around the world has been immense. Congregationalists in 1658 and Baptists in 1677 embraced the same confession, making amendments for church government and baptism that would constitute about ten percent of the whole.

The depth and quality of leadership among Puritan pastors in the mid-17th century is unique in the history of Christ's Church in England. Some of the better known Puritans of this time were Robert Bolton, Robert Harris, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Gouge. Among the more famous Puritans who lived through the period 1640-1660 and beyond, whose works have been republished in entirety or substantially in our generation, are Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Manton, Stephen Charnock, John Owen, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, John Flavel, William Bridge, David Clarkson, George Swinnock, Richard Sibbes, and John Howe.

Of the leaders involved in the Westminster Assembly, William Gouge is one of the best known. He sustained the longest and most powerful ministry, possibly ever, in the history of London. Edmund Calamy, whom some esteemed as the leader of the Presbyterian party, stands out. He preached frequently to Parliament. Hanserd Knollys and

^a See *The Ten Commandments from the Westminster Larger Catechism*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Henry Jessey were Baptists. Their biographies have inspired Baptists in recent years.³² In addition to the immortal works of John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*, there are many famous books that continue to be republished. Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity* is one example and Baxter's *Reformed Pastor* is another.³³

5). *Restoration of the Monarchy and the Decline of Puritanism*

In 1658 Oliver Cromwell died. It was soon evident that Richard Cromwell could not fill the leadership role of his father. To avoid further upheaval, the option to restore the monarchy was pursued. At Breda in Holland, Charles II promised to respect tender consciences. When he came to power, that desire was soon overruled by fierce urges for revenge among the Anglicans who now had the upper hand. From 1643 to 1654, about 34 percent of the 8,600 parish clergy had suffered harassment of some kind; as well as ejection for legitimate reasons of incompetency, but also for giving support to the royalist cause or for popery.³⁴

In January 1661, Thomas Venner, a leader of the Fifth Monarchy^a movement, became prominent. He had been arrested on a previous occasion for planning an insurrection against Cromwell, but was spared execution. Led by Venner, about fifty followers terrorized parts of London. Twenty-two people were killed. Wild elements and civil disorders by fanatics of this kind played into the hands of the ruling Anglicans. They did not discriminate. Anarchy provided an excuse for the authorities to clamp down on all Non-conformists. In vain the Baptists tried to dissociate themselves from Venner. On January 10, 1661, a royal proclamation was passed forbidding all meetings of "Anabaptists, Quakers, and Fifth Monarchy men." Within a short time, over 4,000 Quakers were imprisoned. Armed soldiers dragged Baptists out of their beds at night and thrust them in prison. This was the time when Bunyan spent twelve years in prison. He survived; many did not.

There followed legislation against all Non-conformity known as the *Clarendon Code*, so named after the Earl of Clarendon. In 1662 an act was passed that required strict conformity to the Church of England. If clergymen had not been episcopally ordained, they were required to be re-ordained. Consent was required to every part of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Every minister was required to take an oath of canonical obedience and to renounce the *Solemn League and Covenant*.

These demands had a devastating effect on the Puritans, whose consciences could not submit to these conditions. Estimates vary, but it is reckoned that about 2,000 were forced out of their livings.³⁵ Included were some in teaching posts. We can only guess how many Puritans chose to remain in the National Church in spite of the pressures to conform.³⁶ Included among those who remained was the well known William Gurnall, author of *The Christian in Complete Armour*.

^a **Fifth Monarchy** – extreme Puritan sect active in armed rebellion from 1649 to 1660, seeking to honor Christ by ending earthly rule of carnal human beings.

1662 marks the beginning of decline for the English Puritans. The period that follows is known as the era of “dissent.” The last well-known Puritans to pass from this world were John Howe (who died in 1705) and Thomas Doolittle (who died in 1707).³⁷

1662, then, is an important turning point in the story of the Puritans. The influence of their preaching waned then, but their writing ministry continued. Some of the most valuable Puritan treatises were penned in the post-1662 period. An example is that of John Owen. For instance, his monumental commentary on Hebrews, his book on indwelling sin,^a and his exposition of Psalm 130 were written after 1662. John Owen deserves the title “Prince of the Puritans.” His entire works of 25 volumes probably constitute the best repository of reliable theology in the English language. He is viewed as *the* theologian of the Puritan movement.³⁸

Why did the Puritan movement decline sharply after 1662? Persecution of Dissenters was severe and relentless. Non-conformists were barred from the universities, and this had an adverse effect on the standards of the ministry. The cogent^b spiritual unity that had been characterized and encouraged by the growing spiritual brotherhood of the Puritan pastors during the reign of Elizabeth, and that had flowered in the ascendant Puritan movement which followed, declined after 1662. In 1672 the king issued a *Declaration of Indulgence*, which for a short time eased the lot of Dissenters and Roman Catholics.

A principal reason for the decline of the Puritan Movement was their loss of unity. Dr. Lloyd-Jones^c placed the main blame with the Presbyterians. Instead of holding fast to the unity spelled out so clearly in passages like John 17, Presbyterian leaders resorted to political expediency. They lost sight of spiritual constraints.³⁹ A further reason contributing to the decline of Puritanism in the latter part of the 17th century is the fact that, when the famous leaders whose books we enjoy today passed on, there were very few of similar caliber to take their place.

4. An Explanation of the Puritan Story

In an article published in the *Evangelical Quarterly* in 1980, James I. Packer^d described Puritanism as a movement of revival.⁴⁰ He carefully defined what he meant as revival. I would argue that, measured in terms of the 18th century awakening, the story

^a *Indwelling Sin*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b **cogent** – convincing.

^c **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones** (1899-1981) – well-known expository Welsh preacher; successor to G. Campbell Morgan as minister of Westminster Chapel, London, England, 1938-1968. After successful medical studies, he nearly became a physician when God called him to preach the gospel; known for his Christ-centered expository preaching.

^d **J. I. Packer** (b. 1926) – English-born Canadian evangelical theologian in the low-church Anglican and Calvinist traditions. He served as theologian emeritus of the Anglican Church in North America. In recent years he has endorsed an unbiblical ecumenicalism with Roman Catholicism.

of the Puritans as I have outlined it was not a revival in spectacular “Whitefieldian”^a fashion. There were some remarkable preachers like Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, and John Rogers; and lesser known pastors like Samuel Fairclough of Kedington (not far from Cambridge) and his son Richard of Mells (a village in Somerset)—men with powerful awakening ministries who reaped rich harvests. But it would be difficult to show that this was typical of all the Puritans.

The explanation of the story of the Puritans is that here we have a race of preacher-pastors who believed in expounding and applying the whole counsel of God’s Word, with all the hard work that requires. This was a labor in which they sought the closest conjunction of the Holy Spirit with the Word.⁴¹ Sometimes more, sometimes less, the Holy Spirit *did* breathe upon the Word, and He breathed new life into dead souls. The Puritans did not seek a new age of wonders, signs, and miracles. Their view of a church is that it rises or falls as the ministry of the Word rises or falls in that church.⁴² Essentially, they believed in breaking up fallow ground (Hos 10:12). In this general character, the Puritans are an example to every succeeding generation of pastors—whether they be pastors laboring at home or in remote areas where the indigenous people are receiving the Word for the first time.

5. The Legacy of the Puritans

As we view the whole story of the Puritans in perspective, I will point to three Puritans who lived at the apex of the movement and offer a present-day definition. Puritanism is John Owen for profundity^b and reliability in theological formulation, Richard Baxter for evangelistic and pastoral zeal, and John Bunyan for compelling, powerful preaching. Note how different these three are. This is a reminder that, for the most part, the mainline Puritans were tolerant over differences, whereas fundamentalists today are not.

The Church of England has never recovered from the Ejection of 1662. From time to time there have been exceptional leaders like Bishop J. C. Ryle (1816-1900).^c Ryle followed the emphases of the Puritans and wrote in the style of the Puritans. His well-known book *Holiness* is typical and expounds the Puritan doctrine of progressive sanctification.^d But enthusiasm for Puritanism is rarely found in the Church of England.

^a **George Whitefield** (1714-1770) – English evangelist, best known of the 18th century, and an itinerant preacher that God greatly used in England and the American Colonies during the “Great Awakening” revivals.

^b **profundity** – great depth of thought.

^c More than 25 Ryle titles are available from CHAPEL LIBRARY; including *Holiness*, which also is available as a study course.

^d **progressive sanctification** – process by which the Holy Spirit makes believers more and more like Christ in holiness; as distinct from *positional sanctification*, when God sets the believer apart to Himself at the new birth.

The legacy of Puritan theology and devotion has from time to time given birth to extraordinary preachers and leaders. Such was Charles Haddon Spurgeon,^a correctly described as an heir of the Puritans. Another exemplar of Puritanism is Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who recommended Puritan books and followed them in his theology and style of expository preaching. In his leadership of pastors, Dr. Lloyd-Jones was similar to the founders of Puritanism: William Greenham, John Dod, and Laurence Chaderton. As was the case with leading Puritans, Dr. Lloyd-Jones' pulpit ministry formed the basis of his writings, which have been influential around the world.

The Puritan testimony of godliness and sound doctrine is more relevant than ever as we approach the end of the millennium. The English Puritans gave England [respect and an example for] the Christian family and the Lord's Day. They were balanced Calvinists: they left us an example of a stable doctrine of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Preserved through their writings is the biblical doctrine of sin, which in this era of Postmodernism we are in danger of losing entirely. Added to this was their view of the Moral Law as binding, not for salvation, but as a principle of conduct for the regenerated heart to glorify God in the obedience of faith. The Puritans call us to a robust prayer and devotional life. They remind us of the importance of keeping the heart with all diligence, of the reality of spiritual warfare, and of the need to be watchful.^b

The Puritan hope for the *future growth* of the Church was God-centered and founded on promises that cannot fail. The Puritan doctrine of the last things inspired prayer, motivated effort, inculcated^c endurance, and strengthened patience. One of the first to implement this outlook in practice was the Puritan John Eliot. In 1631 at the age of 27, he sailed for Massachusetts. He became pastor of a new church a mile from Boston. Burdened for the Indian tribes, he set himself to master Algonquin. He began at the age of 40 and eventually translated the entire Bible into Algonquin. Converts were made, churches planted, and Indian pastors trained. By the time of his death, at the age of 84, there were many Indian churches.

Puritanism is eminently biblical and *balanced* in its proportion of doctrine, experience, and practical application. For that reason it is very attractive to the godly. Of its future place in the world, who can tell? If the mainline Puritans were correct in their biblical optimism, we can be assured that the whole earth will be filled with a knowledge of Christ's glory as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14). As the prophet declares,

My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD Almighty (Mal 1:11).

^a More than 200 Spurgeon titles are available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b See *Guarding Your Heart* by A. W. Pink, *Satan Considering the Saints* by C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), and *Temptation* by John Owen (1616-1683); all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c **inculcated** – taught or impressed by frequent repetitions or admonitions.

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These numbered endnotes are from the author.

Lettered footnotes on each page have been added by CHAPEL LIBRARY.

- ¹ Robert Oliver, *The Recovery of the Reformed Faith in Twentieth Century England*, Evangelical Library Lecture for 1997. See also “The Theological Renewal 1950-2000,” *Reformation Today* 162.
- ² Burroughs’ classic is abridged and simplified with the title *Learning to Be Happy*; distributed by Evangelical Press.
- ³ J. R. Green, 1878 and 1909, p 460.
- ⁴ M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago Press, 1939), p 380.
- ⁵ John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689* (Macmillan, 1998), pp 37, 41.
- ⁶ Commended reading on the Great Ejection is Daniel Neal, *History of the Puritans*, volume 3.
- ⁷ Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II*, volume 1, 1558-1688, p 240; citing Loades, *The Mid-Tudor Crisis*, p 161.
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- ⁹ Ibid [i.e., same as before], p 20, citing J. Stowe, *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gardiner (Camden Society, 1880, new series, xxviii), p 143.
- ¹⁰ Hylson-Smith, op.cit. [i.e., in the work cited], p 61.
- ¹¹ Patrick Collinson, *Godly People – Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (Hambledon Press, 1983), p 1.
- ¹² Spurr, op.cit., p 17.
- ¹³ Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinist – The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987).
- ¹⁴ Spurr, op. cit., p 171.
- ¹⁵ S. T. Bindoff, “Tudor England,” *Pelican History of England*, p 179.
- ¹⁶ Daniel Neal, *History of the Puritans*, volume. 1, p 124.
- ¹⁷ William Haller, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (Jonathan Cape, 1963), p 220ff. Neville Williams, in a lecture published in 1975 by Dr. Williams’ Library, helpfully summarizes the development of Foxe’s ever increasing manuscript and its editions. The best edition of eight massive volumes was edited by Josiah Pratt and published in 1853, a set of which can be found in the reference section of the Evangelical Library, London.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, p 224ff.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p 30.
- ²⁰ I have drawn most of my material on the spiritual brotherhood from William Haller’s *The Rise of Puritanism* (Harper Torchbook, 464 pages, 1957), a most valuable resource that needs to be republished.
- ²¹ Richard Rogers, 970 page facsimile exposition of Judges was republished by the Banner of Truth in 1983.
- ²² This title has been republished as a paperback by the Banner of Truth Trust.
- ²³ Paul S Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships, “The Politics of Religious Dissent, 1560-1662”* (Stanford University Press, California, 1970), p 172ff.
- ²⁴ Spurr, p 61.
- ²⁵ Tyacke, p 47ff; cf. Spurr, p 81ff.
- ²⁶ Spurr, op. cit., p 86.
- ²⁷ Macaulay, *The History of England*, volume 1 (Longman, 1856), p 88.
- ²⁸ Neal, op. cit., volume 1, p 538ff.
- ²⁹ Spurr, p 91.
- ³⁰ Ibid, p 117ff.
- ³¹ *Cromwell Our Chief of Men* (Panther, 1975), p 390.

- ³² Michael A. G. Haykin, Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach, *Rediscovering our Baptist Heritage* (Carey Publications, 1996).
- ³³ John Bunyan's *Complete Works* is published in three large handsome volumes by the Banner of Truth Trust, and by the same publisher the very popular *Body of Divinity* by Thomas Watson, and Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*, the latter as a paperback.
- ³⁴ Hylson-Smith, p 225; cf Spurr, p 118.
- ³⁵ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "From Puritanism to Nonconformity," provides a stirring account of the Great Ejection and its implications, Evangelical Library Lecture for 1962.
- ³⁶ David L Wykes, "To Revive the Memory of Some Excellent Men," Dr. Williams' Library Lecture for 1997. This paper approaches to the most accurate count for the 1662 Ejection that we are ever likely to achieve. Dr. Wykes outlines the history of biography on this subject with special reference to Edmund Calamy's work, Edmund Calamy being the grandson of the well-known Puritan of the same name.
- ³⁷ Thomas Doolittle's sermon "Eyeing Eternity" is found in volume four of the six large volume set known as *The Morning Exercises – Sermons Preached by the Puritans at Cripplegate, London* (Richard Owen Roberts, Wheaton, Illinois, 1981). "Eyeing Eternity," it has been suggested, may be the most awesome Puritan sermon ever preached! Thomas Doolittle's work on the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was published by Soli Deo Gloria in 1998.
- ³⁸ Sinclair Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Banner of Truth, 1987), p 19.
- ³⁹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Puritan Perplexities," Puritan Conference Paper, 1962
- ⁴⁰ J. I. Packer, *Among God's Giants – The Puritan vision of the Christian Life* (Kingsway, 1991), p 41ff.
- ⁴¹ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago University Press, 1992).
- ⁴² J. I. Packer, op.cit., p 45.

PART TWO

THE LIVES OF THE PURITANS

Against the overview of the history of the Puritan era, I now present some short biographical sketches. Two factors dominate the choice of subjects. The first is to become acquainted with those Puritans whose writings have been republished. Who were these preachers and what were they like? The second is to capture the character of the movement through some of the leaders who, while not known for their writings, made an impact in other ways. Benjamin Brook provides brief sketches of the lives of about 450 Puritans in his three volumes.^a Here I will introduce two Reformers, four Elizabethan Puritans, five pre-1662 Puritans, and twelve who lived through the climactic ejection of 1662 and beyond. In this way we will keep in step with the story already told, seek to enter into more of the struggles of these ministers of the gospel, and gain an appreciation of the inheritance they have left us by the example of their godly lives and in their expository writings.

1. Martyrs

As we have seen, antecedent to the great Puritan movement was the Reformation. From among many martyrs, including foremost leaders such as Bishops Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer, I have chosen to describe John Bradford and John Hooper since they are especially prototypical^b of what was to follow. John Bradford was the first Englishman to expound in detail on the nature of evangelical repentance. Bishop John Hooper was outstanding in his pastoral concern for the parishes over which he had oversight. The ignorant state of the clergy at that time highlights the change that was eventually to be achieved. Hooper was a man aflame with zeal for God and amazingly energetic in his labors for his people. This makes it all the more incredible that a leader of such quality should be condemned to burn at the stake.

The saying that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church” is true of the Puritans. When Mary came to the throne, she was determined to return England to Rome. Superstitious, devious, and unfaithful to her promises, she relentlessly persecuted all who stood in her way. Before her enthronement, she promised a group of stalwart believers in Suffolk that religion would remain as it was under her brother Edward. When she began to renege on her promise, a delegation was sent from Suffolk to plead with her. The outcome was that she accused the leader of defamation and or-

^a Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans* (three volumes, 1813) (Soli Deo Gloria, 1997).

^b **prototypical** – forming the essential features of something to follow.

dered that his ears be cut off! It is little wonder that, anticipating cruel persecution, 800 Protestants fled to the Continent.

The gruesome scenes of human bodies burning in public places were etched into the minds of the people, bringing about a deep detestation of Romish superstition and cruelty. The faith, constancy, and courage of those who died was the talk of the nation. We have seen the remarkable life of John Foxe, and the crucial role he fulfilled in recording the details of the lives and deaths of these martyrs in his *Book of Martyrs*, which had such an effect on the nation.

All these martyrs bore a glorious testimony. John Bradford and John Hooper especially exemplify characteristics that were typical of the Puritanism which was to develop. They and the other martyrs provided the bed-rock upon which Puritanism was built.

A. John Bradford (1510-1555)

Bradford was born in Manchester of wealthy parents, who sent him into the army for experience. He decided to follow law, but in 1547 was dramatically converted through the testimony of a friend, Thomas Sampson, who later became an exile during Mary's reign. Bradford sold some valuable possessions, gave the proceeds to the poor, and began to train for the ministry at Cambridge. He advanced rapidly in godliness. There he was influenced by the famous continental Reformer, Martin Bucer,^a who was teaching at Cambridge at that time. Bradford was ordained in 1550. Under the young King Edward, he was chosen to be one of six travelling chaplains preaching the gospel and teaching the doctrines of the Reformation. He was a powerful preacher. Foxe wrote of him,

Sharply he opened and impugned sin, sweetly he preached Christ crucified, pithily he reproved heresies and errors, earnestly he persuaded the godly life.

Bradford was cogent with his pen. Having preached often on repentance, he also wrote on it. It was the first written exposition in England on that central subject. Bradford inspired the Puritan emphasis on repentance. He was a pioneer in the Puritan practice of constancy in prayer: prayer upon rising, prayer before and after meals, prayer before work and before retiring at night. Bradford was also an example in the art of maintaining piety by way of daily turning from sin and keeping a written spiritual diary of daily devotion.

Bradford's correspondence reveals him to be a leader of exceptional spiritual caliber. His letters show us how the leading Christians of that time encouraged each other. Also in Bradford's letters we have a preview of what was to come in the bonding together of the Puritan pastors during the reign of Elizabeth.

^a **Martin Bucer** (1491-1551) – German Protestant reformer who influenced Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican doctrines and practices. He was exiled to England, where he worked with Thomas Cranmer.

With John Bradford when he was burned at the stake in 1555 was a young apprentice, aged nineteen, named John Leaf. As they died together, Bradford encouraged this young martyr with the words: "Be of good comfort, brother: we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night!"

B. John Hooper (1495-1555)

John Hooper, the only son of wealthy parents, was born in Somerset in 1495. He studied at Merton College, Oxford. On leaving he became a monk in the Cistercian order, which stressed poverty, simplicity, and solitude. On the dissolution of the monasteries, he went first to London and then returned to Oxford. Being a diligent student of the Scriptures, especially of Paul's letters, he came to see the errors of Rome and became an ardent advocate of the Reformation. He had to leave England in 1546 and spent time at Strasbourg and Zurich. During his stay on the Continent, Hooper fully imbibed the spirit of the Reformation. Jan Laski (1499-1560), son of one of the richest aristocratic families in Poland, was his closest friend. Laski pastored a church made up of foreigners in London during the reign of Edward. This church was thoroughly reformed in character and had a powerful influence on Hooper's thinking.

Hooper returned to England after the death of Henry. In 1551 he became bishop of Gloucester. Controversy, requiring some compromise, surrounded his ordination because of his refusal to follow an order of service that contradicted his principles. Hooper was an excellent, powerful, and popular preacher. Large crowds came to hear him. He was deeply exercised about the ignorance and corruption of the clergy and made it his habit to tour his diocese visiting the ministers.

One of his efforts aimed at local reformation was to send out a questionnaire to the 311 clergy of his diocese. Nine basic questions included:

- How many commandments are there?
- Where are they to be found?
- Can you show where the Lord's prayer is found?
- Who is the author of the Lord's prayer?

Nine did not know how many commandments there were, 39 did not know the location of the Lord's prayer, and 34 did not know who the author was! Eight could not answer any of the questions. Such was the state of the clergy of the Church of England! This is important because it highlights vividly the change that was to come about: from biblical illiteracy to England's being the land of the Bible.

Hooper's evangelistic and pastoral passion and his zeal to reform the Church were powerful influences on the Puritan movement, as was his death by burning.

2. Three Generations of Puritans

Taking the lives of the Puritans of Elizabeth's reign as the first generation, the second can be regarded as those who followed in the first half of the 17th century but who did not live up to the time of the Great Ejection in 1662. The principal event of

this period was the Westminster Assembly (1643-47). The third generation can be taken as those who lived through the Ejection and beyond. It was in the latter period when most of the “writing” Puritans lived, whose works have been republished.

A. *The First Generation*

As we saw in the story of the Puritans, a spiritual brotherhood developed in the 1580s and 1590s that was to provide the seedbed of the next generation of godly pastors. I described the lives of William Greenham, Richard Rogers, Laurence Chaderton, and William Perkins. The godly influence of these leaders formed a foundation for the future. Today we do well to ask if the next generation of our ministers will be well grounded and powerful in the main principles of the Christian faith. We have already seen how Richard Greenham trained young men in the village of Dry Drayton in his “School of Christ,” and William Perkins influenced many young men at Cambridge. Perkins’ books were very popular and largely shaped the thinking of the next generation of preachers. We remember too Laurence Chaderton and his long ministry at Cambridge. When he came to retire, forty people who had been converted through him came, begging him to continue his ministry. We saw too the influence of Richard Rogers of Wethersfield, who was deeply exercised about the necessity and development of vital godliness as applied to every area of life.

We start with the short life of Edward Dering, which illustrates the Puritans’ battle to reform the Church—a work in which they did not succeed.

Then follows John Dod, who reminds us of the main ingredients of the spiritual lives of the brotherhood. Dod was an outstanding leader. He lived long and exercised a wide and pervasive influence as a powerful preacher, a godly pastor, and an example of what it is to use hospitality to advance the cause of Christ. An often forgotten mark of an elder is that he must be hospitable. In this Dod excelled.

Next we look at Arthur Hildersam, who was a great encouragement to his brother-pastors. It is important to note that his life reflects the major shift away from Roman Catholicism that was taking place throughout this period. He was disinherited, and even though he was connected in background to the royal family, he suffered much for his testimony. Some enjoyed protection on account of rich, sympathetic, and aristocratic patrons. Hildersam did not.

Finally there is John Rogers. Every time I think of Rogers, I think of the necessity of life and power in preaching. There are some preachers you will never and cannot forget. Holy Spirit-anointed preaching is the need of this hour. In John Rogers’ day, there were those who travelled a long way to Dedham to hear him preach. They said that they went “to fetch fire” at Dedham. So too, *we* need “to fetch fire” from heaven so that our preaching will be alive and convey life to our hearers.

1). *Edward Dering (1540-1576)*

Edward Dering was born into a distinguished family in Kent. In 1572 Dering married Anne Locke, a wealthy widow who admired the preaching of John Knox and had spent time in Geneva. The Puritan scholar Patrick Collinson calls Dering

The archetype^a of the Puritan divine, whose life and works were a model for many who would come after him in the 17th century... an incomparable illustration of some of the more positive qualities of the Puritan spirit.

Dering studied at Christ's College, Cambridge, early in Mary's reign—at which time Cambridge was a seedbed of Puritan religion. By the manner in which he wrote to his brothers, we can tell that he was fervent in his evangelical faith. His main passion was the question of salvation from sin:

- how through a true faith in Christ we can be sure that we will be saved in the great Day of Judgment, and
- how the believer can be assured of his standing before a holy God.

Dering was esteemed as one of the outstanding Greek scholars of that time. He was chosen to make a Greek oration on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's visit to the university in 1564. He was privileged in his friendship with the archbishop and enjoyed opportunities to preach on important occasions. There came a kind of mysterious watershed in his career in 1570, when Dering became indignant about the debased state of the ministry in the country.

According to his friends, he expressed this indignation too forcibly in his preaching. In a sermon preached before the queen in her chapel on 25 February 1570, he reproved Her Majesty for neglect in her duty to rid the churches of unworthy incumbents, some of whom he described as ruffians, hawkers, and dicers.^b He pictured these ministers as blind guides and dumb dogs that will not bark. He told her to her face,

And yet you, in the meanwhile that all these whoredoms are committed, you at whose hands God will require it, you sit still and are careless, and let men do as they will!

Unlike Whitgift (later to be promoted to archbishop), who used his opportunity to preach before the queen to impress her, Dering seemed impervious to the consequence of reminding her that great power involved commensurate responsibility. Perhaps Dering was free of the temptation of ambition and self-interest, as he sensed that he would not live long because of tuberculosis. That disease was in fact to take him to an early grave. No Elizabethan sermon was more reprinted than Dering's remarkable oration in which he confronted the queen with her responsibilities.

Courageous preaching of this kind that exposed the dreadful spiritual state of the clergy embarrassed Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Cecil, Elizabeth's first minister. It is not surprising that Dering's influence declined. However, he continued

^a **archetype** – ideal example of a type; quintessence.

^b **dicers** – those who gamble with dice.

to enjoy the confidence of Sandys, Bishop of London, who gave him the privilege of preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral, London. There Dering preached an outstanding and powerful series of sermons on Hebrews, which accorded him the reputation of being the greatest preacher of his day.

Dering, in his direct style and passionate preaching, was similar to Henry Smith (1560-1591), whose ministry made its impact in London in the next decade. Smith, a student of William Greenhill, was called to St. Clement Danes, London, where capacity crowds—grocers, locksmiths, tradesmen, people of every sort—flocked to hear him. He was a wonderful preacher and was nick-named “the silver-tongued Smith.” Such was his power in preaching that he could hold the hearts of his hearers in his hands and steer them wherever he pleased, and he was pleased to steer them only to God's glory and their own good. He was proficient in the business of redemption. He died at age only 31, but, like Edward Dering, “he lived long in a little time.”

In 1570 to 1572, controversy about church government raged, fueled by the writings of Cartwright, Field, and Wilcox. Dering was called to declare where he stood in relationship to these writings. Unlike Perkins, Dering was not a systematic theologian and was fairly ambivalent about church government. His enemies were determined to have him removed from privilege and office. However, Dering was so well connected and protected by men of high rank that it was difficult to suspend him. All efforts to silence him failed. Queen Elizabeth ordered that Dering not only be silenced but removed from his lectureship. Even that failed as her deputies could not agree among themselves as to the formulation of the charge to be brought against him.

Letter writing formed an important part of Dering's ministry. This included letters of spiritual counsel to women of high standing and influence. It is a feature of the Puritan movement that often the most enthusiastic supporters of Puritan ministries were women, some of whom were deeply committed to reformation, whereas their husbands were less so. One of his correspondents was Mrs. Honywood, a lady who was plagued about her assurance of salvation. Mrs. Honywood once told John Foxe that she was as surely damned as the glass that she held in her hand. She then hurled the glass violently to the floor. Amazingly, the glass bounced up without any damage!

When dying at age 36, Dering was surrounded by fellow-preachers who wrote down his last words. He left this world having contributed wonderfully to the Puritan movement.

2). John Dod (1550-1645)

Born in Cheshire, John Dod went to Cambridge to study at Jesus College. While he was “in his natural state of sin,” he flew into such a temper when accused of not paying the college steward that he was overcome with a fever. It is reported that it was then that “his sins came upon him like an armed man, and the tide of his thoughts was turned.” His conversion was real and new life began. An interesting record shows that the steward later remembered that he had, after all, been paid.

Dod was much in demand as a popular preacher. He settled at Hanwell in Oxfordshire, where he exercised a powerful preaching ministry for twenty years that was instrumental in the conversion of hundreds of souls. With four other preachers, he set up a lectureship at Banbury. Like Hildesam, he experienced fierce persecution from 1604 onwards.

William Haller, in his book *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938), describes Dod as the chief holy man of the spiritual brotherhood; and says of him, "He had the English gift of humour and the knack of salty speech." Cartwright describes Dod as being "the fittest man in the land for a pastoral function, able to speak to any man's capacity." According to one of his disciples,

All his discourses were sermons, and that with such a mixture of delight as would take any man; so facetious and pithy that, if all his sayings were collected, they would exceed all that Plutarch in Greek or others in Latin have published.

Another reported,

Poor simple people that never knew what religion meant, when they had gone to hear him, could not but choose to talk of his sermon. It mightily affected poor creatures to hear the mysteries of God brought down to their language and dialect.

One of Dod's sayings was that he would rather preach an old sermon ten times, than speak any new thing without preparation.

John Dod preached twice on Sunday and once during the week. After every sermon his wife opened the house to all comers. We read of him,

He brought in many to dinner, including four to six widows who helped him as deaconesses would. If his wife began to doubt that there would be enough food to go round, he would respond, "Better want meat than good company, but there is something in this house even though cold." Eating little himself but bidding the rest fall to, he would go on talking. He had plenty to say; and when he was faint, he would call for a small glass of wine mixed with beer, and then talk again till night.

Many looked to Dod for wisdom. Two well-known Puritans, Job Throckmorton and John Preston, both seeing in the same year that their lives were drawing to a close, settled in Dod's area in order to have the advantage of his spiritual counsel. Unusual for a Puritan minister, Job Throckmorton experienced a major problem concerning his personal assurance of salvation. Shortly before he died he asked Mr. Dod, "What will you say of him who is going out of this world, and can find no comfort?" Replied Dod,

What will you say of our Saviour Christ, Who, when He was going out of the world, found no comfort, but cried, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

This administered comfort to Throckmorton's troubled soul; and when he died soon after, he was rejoicing in the Lord.

Since Dod lived to 95, we are not surprised to discover that he was, in addition to his own pastoral work, a counsellor to those who had to weigh up the factors about leaving England to cross the Atlantic for a new life in America.

3). *Arthur Hildersam (1563-1631)*

Hildersam was related to the royal family. His parents were Roman Catholic. Steeped in the doctrines of Rome, he was taught to repeat his prayers in Latin. He chose to study at Cambridge, where he was converted. His father was furious and determined to send him to Rome for reclamation. Arthur refused—and was disinherited. However, one of his wide circle of wealthy relatives—the Earl of Huntingdon, who sympathized with his dilemma—sent him back to Cambridge endowed with generous support.

In 1588, Hildersam was charged with the transgression of preaching before he was officially ordained. He was ordered to make a public confession of repentance. A statement in abject penitent style survives as a printed document, but there is doubt that Hildersam ever read this out in a public apology.

It was while under the shadows of this public reproach that he was called to a church in Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire, where he continued to the end of his life, a period of forty-three years. During that time he often suffered persecution. The influence of his preaching was profound and widespread, but it also stirred in those who rejected his message the most virulent hatred toward him. When King James came to power, Hildersam was esteemed a foremost leader of the Puritans, and was appointed representative to present the *Millenary Petition* signed by over 1,000 clergy. This petition pleaded for reformation.

He married in 1590, and this union was greatly blessed. His wife proved to be a constant comfort and strength in the persecutions that he suffered. During his subsequent ministry, he suffered several periods of being silenced. For instance, in 1616 he was excommunicated, degraded from the ministry, and ordered to be thrown into prison for not submitting to the rites of the Church of England. At the same time he was fined the outrageous sum of £2,000, a vast sum of money in those days that was entirely beyond his means.

Hildersam was not guilty of drunkenness, adultery, or any such immorality. It was only due to his refusal to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England that he suffered these extreme penalties. He was resented on account of his very widespread spiritual influence, and was dubbed “a ringleader of all schismatical^a persons in that part of the country.” The manner in which he faced this trial, which threatened to destroy him, is instructive. It reminds us that when we face extraordinary problems, we must persevere in prayer and deal with each factor one by one. Prayerfully, Arthur set about extricating himself step by step. The first move was to get out of prison. This was by appeal to influential friends. The previous year, when he was in prison on a similar charge of refusing to conform, a friend had written to Archbishop Abbot, who had responded with impatience saying that Arthur would die in prison if he did not conform. He was released, but still had to face the fine that was completely

^a **schismatical** – that which causes breach of union within a religious body.

above his ability. He wrote to a Lady Fielding asking that she use her influence to reduce the fine. Along similar lines, he wrote to the Earl of Suffolk seeking his help. Eventually the fine was reduced, but he still had to pay an exorbitant sum of money.

During his last illness, Hildersam was noted for his spiritual, holy, and heavenly conversation. To his son he gave a solemn charge to take heed to the flock. It was while he was praying with his son that he entered upon the joy of his Lord. In his *Lives of the Puritans*, Benjamin Brook devotes twelve pages to Hildersam. He was outstanding in the attribute of meekness. He was not flamboyant or aggressive in his non-conformity, but firm and patient. The quality of his humility is seen in one of his statements that he always sought to benefit from the preaching of others. He declared that he never failed to be edified by faithful preaching, even when the preacher was not endowed with natural talent.

Among the admirers of Arthur Hildersam were William Gouge, John Preston, and John Cotton. His disciples saw in their ideal spiritual physician one who was always willing, in his own words,

To instruct the ignorant, to satisfy the doubtful, to settle the wavering, to comfort the dejected, and to encourage all sorts in the exercises of religion.

We see exemplified in Hildersam the advantages of spending a life time in one pastorate, enduring and surviving enormous oppositions and distractions; but always patient and steadfast, a wonderful example of godliness. He did not leave written works apart from two substantial expositions, one on John chapter four and the other on Psalm 51.

4). *John Rogers (1566-1636)*

John Rogers of Dedham, Essex, was a near relative of Richard Rogers of Wethersfield, whose life we have already remembered. Richard supported John Rogers in his studies at Cambridge and persevered with him, even though he was so given to sin that he sold his books to follow his pleasure-loving worldly habits. Eventually, John provoked Richard Rogers to the point of giving him up, but Richard's wife persuaded him to try once more, which reminds us of the parable of the fig tree:

Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down (Luk 13:7-9).

This persevering concern of Mrs. Richard Rogers was rewarded, for John was converted and in due course became one of the most powerful of all the Puritan preachers.

The gift of preaching was given to John Rogers in such a marked way, it was said of him that few heard him preach without trembling. Many souls were converted through his preaching, and he was regarded as one of the most awakening preachers of his age. Bishop Brownrigg used to say, "John Rogers will do more good with his wild notes, than we [bishops] with our set music!" People crowded to hear him from a wide area. Often many were disappointed at not being able to gain admittance. A well-known Puri-

tan minister, Giles Firmin, records that he owed his conversion to the first sentences he ever heard from John Rogers. Some young men went to hear him preach and, although they were late, managed to squeeze in. Seeing them come in, John Rogers cried out, “Here are some young ones come for Christ. Will nothing serve you but you must have Christ? Then you *shall* have Him!” Giles Firmin was gripped at once and converted.

John Rogers’ power in preaching is illustrated by an occasion when the famous Puritan Thomas Goodwin (then a young man) was reduced under his preaching to helpless tears of repentance and gratitude toward God. Goodwin himself told the story to the renowned John Howe years later. Howe recalls the incident:

Mr. Rogers was...on the subject of the Scriptures. And in that sermon he falls into an expostulation^a with the people about their neglect of the Bible...He personates God to the people telling them,

“Well, I have trusted you so long with my Bible: you have slighted it; it lies in such and such a house all covered with dust and cobwebs. You care not to look at it. Do you use my Bible so? Well, you shall have my Bible no longer.”

And he takes up the Bible from his cushion and seemed as if he were going away with it and carrying it from them. But immediately [he] turns again and impersonates the people to God, falls down on his knees, cries and pleads most earnestly

“Lord, whatsoever Thou dost to us, take not the Bible from us. Kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods; only spare us Thy Bible, take not away Thy Bible.”

And then he personates God again to the people,

“Say you so? Well, I will try you a little while longer; and here is my Bible for you. I will see how you use it, whether you will love it more, whether you will practice it more, and live more according to it.”

By these actions (as the Doctor told me), he put the congregation into so strange a posture that he never saw in any congregation in his life. The place was a mere *Bochim*,^b the people generally (as it were) deluged with their own tears. And he told me that he himself, when he got out and was to take horse again, was fain to hang a quarter of an hour on the neck of his horse weeping before he had the power to mount—so strange an impression was there upon him, and generally upon the people, having been thus expostulated with for neglect of the Bible.

The greatest need of our times is the recovery of true Holy Spirit unction in preaching the gospel to the saving of sinners. The fervor, power, and expressiveness of John Rogers in the pulpit was typical of the Puritans.

^a **expostulation** – earnest reasoning with someone against something they are doing; earnest protest.

^b **Bochim** – (*Hebrew*: weepers) place near Gilgal where an angel of the Lord charged the Israelites with having disobeyed God in making leagues with the inhabitants of the land. The people wept and repented (Jdg 2:1-5).

B. The Second Generation

In Part One, *The Story of the Puritans*, I described the events leading up to the Civil War. It was during that time, on 12 June 1643, that Parliament passed an ordinance calling for an Assembly of learned and godly divines for the settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England. On 1 July the Westminster Assembly convened. *The Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* that were drawn up by them and endorsed by Parliament have had a profound effect on subsequent Church history. Whole books have been devoted to a description of the Westminster Assembly. Those ministers involved needed to be within reasonable travelling distance of London in order meaningfully to attend the sessions and debates of the Assembly. Of the five ministers that I describe now, Robert Harris, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Gouge were members of the Assembly. Richard Sibbes, a very well-known Puritan on account of his writings, died in 1635. Robert Bolton was known especially as a physician of the soul. He was typical of the Puritans that were multiplying during this phase of history, a multiplication that can be seen in the number of outstanding ministers available to participate in the Westminster Assembly.

1). Robert Bolton (1572-1631)

Robert Bolton was a well-known Puritan, and his fame continues today mainly because of the republication of his best known work, *A Treatise on Comforting Afflicted Consciences* (first published in 1626). John MacArthur Jr. says of this book, “It remains a definitive study in how to deal practically with guilt.” Writing in the foreword of the 1991 *Soli Deo Gloria* reprint, MacArthur points out that he does not know of a single book published in the previous 20 years that explains in depth how to respond biblically to a grieved or wounded conscience! Bolton wrote a number of books. In addition to the above (which edition is now depleted), his works *A Comfortable Walking with God* and his *Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven*, have been republished by *Soli Deo Gloria*.

Robert Bolton was born in Blackburn in Lancashire in 1572. His parents observed that he was exceptionally gifted. They were poor, but they sacrificed financially for him to be well-educated. In grammar school he attained the status of best scholar. At the age of 20 he went to Lincoln College, Oxford, where he proved to be an outstanding student. He mastered the Greek language and, such was his ability, he was able to support himself as a teacher until he became a tutor in the university at the age of thirty.

In all this time he was not converted. Indeed, he loved this present evil world and was hostile to the ministry of godly preachers like William Perkins, the well-known Puritan teacher at Cambridge. However, Bolton came under deep conviction of sin. This lasted for several months and was so intense and painful that his experience has been compared to that of Martin Luther.^a Eventually he came into peace through faith in

^a See *Luther's Conversion* by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889), evangelistic tract available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Christ, and trusted only in that righteousness which is the gift of God. At age 35 he was ordained into the Christian ministry. When he was 40, he married—and was wonderfully blessed in his wife, who enthusiastically supported him in his ministry. Bolton was outstanding in the quality and energy of his labors. It is said of him that his entire aim in preaching was to convert his hearers, and under God’s blessing hundreds were savingly converted. He spent 20 years in a vigorous ministry in the parish of Broughton in Northamptonshire.

Having been a slave of worldly pleasures, he knew firsthand how to expose sin in all its deceptive, destructive, and poisoning powers. Bolton was bold and uncompromising in his style of preaching. He prepared by rehearsing his sermons to himself in private first before preaching them in public. Like John the Baptist and our Lord, he was fearless and had no regard for the hatred and resentment that can be aroused through a faithful ministry. It was noted that he was thoroughly at ease in preaching the free and full offer of the gospel to all without exception. He was wholly committed to a life of prayer, and made it his habit to pray six times in the day. He also observed special days for humiliation and prayer, especially before leading the Lord’s Supper.

In his last illness, at age 60, Bolton bore a glorious testimony to his people and family. He fervently prayed for them all, and was very direct with them personally about salvation, commending each in prayer to the Lord. He was full of personal assurance of his acceptance with God and expressed his great longing “to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phi 1:23).

2). Robert Harris (1578-1658)

Born at Broad Camden in Gloucestershire, Robert Harris went to school at Chipping Camden, then to Worcester, and from there to Magdalen Hall, Oxford. There he was taught by Goffe, who was a Puritan. Harris was not a believer, but he bought a Bible and some theological books that led to his conversion. With his tutor, he studied Greek, Hebrew, and Calvin’s *Institutes*.^a

He was invited to preach at Chipping Camden. Such was the ignorance in that area that no Bible could be found to use in the pulpit. The clergyman had lost his Bible! A search was made and eventually the lost Bible was found. Harris then preached from Romans 10:1: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” At that time, Harris persuaded his father to support him further in his studies at Oxford. Not long after, an epidemic of the plague broke out—in those days, the plague could destroy more than half the population.

Harris found lodging about five miles from Oxford, where opportunities to preach opened to him. 1604/1605 was a period of severe persecution. About 300 ministers were suspended from office. Among these was the famous John Dod, minister of Hanwell. The ministry of Dod had been extraordinary, and hundreds of souls had been converted

^a See *Calvin on Self-denial, Calvin on Prayer, Calvin on The Mediator*, taken from *The Institutes of Christian Religion* and available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

through his preaching. The outstanding talents and learning of Robert Harris constrained the bishop in charge of Hanwell to agree to his being ordained there. About this time he married. Also at that time a close friendship developed between John Dod and Harris. Here we have an example of the way in which the Puritans strengthened each other, in unity and vision for the gospel and for reformation.

Harris continued to minister in Hanwell for about 40 years. As many used to come to John Dod for spiritual counsel, so likewise many young preachers sought the wisdom and leadership of Robert Harris. He was blessed with many children; all of them followed in the pathway of righteousness and honored Christ in their callings. Harris was very disciplined in his lifestyle. Of liquor, he said he would rather pour it into his boots than into his mouth between meals! He allowed himself half of Saturday for physical recreation. He observed that the most humble preachers were instrumental in converting souls, rather than the greatest scholars who were proud. Nevertheless, he himself worked hard in his study, and his scholarship and preaching ministry were much valued by the whole university fraternity in Oxford. His gifts were recognized in London, and he was frequently invited to preach before Parliament. He also participated in the work of the Westminster Assembly.

In 1644 at the onset of the Civil War, he lost all his possessions in the upheaval. A company of soldiers strongly opposed to Harris were living in the town. Their evil language constrained him to preach a sermon on James 5:12 entitled "Swear not at all" (Mat 5:324)! This so offended the soldiers that they swore they would shoot him if he preached again from the same text. Undismayed by their threats, he did just that the following Sabbath. As he was preaching, he noticed a soldier preparing his weapon as if to shoot. Not perturbed, Harris completed his sermon.

In his last illness, Robert Harris testified, "I never in all my life saw the worth of Christ, nor tasted the sweetness of God's love in that measure as now I do."

3). *Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)*

Richard Sibbes was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge. He was called to be lecturer at Trinity College, where his preaching was instrumental in the conversion of many. John Cotton, afterward to become a famous leader in New England, was one of the students converted under his ministry. His reputation as a preacher and teacher spread, and this led to a regular ministry in London at Gray's Inn. Gray's Inn was then, as now, one of the most important centers for legal study and practice. Benjamin Brook says,

Besides the learned lawyers, many of the nobility and gentry as well as citizens flocked to hear him; and great numbers had abundant cause to bless God for the benefit which they derived from his ministry.

He was careful always to lay a good foundation in the heads and hearts of his hearers. In private life, he was charitable to the poor and an excellent pastor.

In 1626, Sibbes became master of St. Catherine's College. The terms of his ministry in London required that he should hold no other ecclesiastical living, but since he had

an assistant at Gray's Inn, and since he never married, it was practical for him to travel to Cambridge during the week. St. Catherine's had passed through a long period of decline when Sibbes took up the mastership. Finance was at a low ebb and there were few students. Sibbes was used to turn this situation round and lead the college into the most brilliant period of its history.

Sibbes' influence in Cambridge as a *pastor pastorum*, a maker and shaper of ministers, was second only to that of William Perkins. His preaching in the same church where Perkins had ministered, St. Mary's, had widespread influence, as did his ministry at Gray's Inn in London.

Inasmuch as Richard Sibbes was a physician of the heart who expounded the soul's conflict, he anticipates the ministry a century later of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and his most famous book *The Religious Affections*. The best known books by Sibbes are *The Bruised Reed and the Smoking Flax*, *The Returning Backslider*, and *The Soul's Conflict*. Sibbes is one of the best known Puritans; his influence pervaded every part of the Puritan movement.

4). *Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1646)*

Burroughs is described by Benjamin Brook in his three volume work, *The Lives of the Puritans*, as a very amiable divine who was educated at Cambridge (Emmanuel College). But he quit the university, and afterwards England, on account of his non-conformity. He assisted Edmund Calamy at St. Edmunds, and then enjoyed a five-year lectureship in Tivetshall, Norfolk. When persecution increased, he was deprived of his living and in 1636 fled to Holland. There he assisted William Bridge, who was pastor of a church of English exiles in Rotterdam.

With the commencement of the Civil War, the power of the bishops to persecute subsided. Burroughs then returned to England where he ministered to the London congregations of Cripplegate and Stepney, which were reputed to have the largest attendances in England. He took the 7:00 am service at Stepney and William Greenhill preached at 3:00 pm. The saying spread that Burroughs was the morning star and Greenhill the evening star of Stepney.

Burroughs was chosen to be one of the divines for the Westminster Assembly. He was a man of peace. Richard Baxter, who knew his virtues well, maintained that

If all the Episcopalians had been like Archbishop Ussher; all the Presbyterians like Mr. Stephen Marshall; and all the Independents like Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs—the breaches of the Church would soon have been healed.

Burroughs was an exceptionally fine preacher, and wrote as well as he preached. He was a prolific worker and his extensive writings were consistently penetrating and spiritual. It is quite remarkable that at the time of his death, at the early age of 47, he left so much writing of enduring quality. The Banner of Truth published his best known work, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. Soli Deo Gloria (USA) has republished a number of his books, including *A Treatise on the Evil of Evils* (a study on sin), *The Ex-*

cellency of a Gracious Spirit, A Treatise on Earthly-Mindedness, Gospel Worship, Gospel Fear, Gospel Remission, Gospel Conversation, The Saints' Happiness (The Beatitudes), and The Saints' Treasury.

His work on peace—*Irenicum: To Lovers of Truth and Peace; Heart-divisions opened in the causes and evils of them; With cautions that we may be hurt by them; And endeavours to heal them*—is a work of about 400 pages published by Soli Deo Gloria. Of Burroughs' four volume work on Hosea, Spurgeon declared: "Masterly. A vast treasure house of experimental exposition." This was published by Soli Deo Gloria during the early 1990s, but the entire edition sold out.

5). *William Gouge (1575-1653)*

Born at Bow in Middlesex, William Gouge was educated at Eton School and then St. Catherine's College, Cambridge. He was blessed with a fine intellect and was exceedingly disciplined in study. In nine years he was never absent from college prayers at 5:30 AM unless sick. He made it his habit to read fifteen chapters of the Bible a day. At college he was chosen as reader of logic and philosophy. Those who were envious nicknamed him the "arch-Puritan."

In 1608 he was chosen as minister of Blackfriars Church, London. There he ministered for 46 years until his death in 1653. Many offers to become minister in other churches came to him, but he used to say, "It is my highest ambition to go from Blackfriars to heaven!" For 35 years, Gouge maintained a Wednesday morning lecture. Benjamin Brook writes of Gouge,

So great was his fame that, when religious persons from distant parts of the country went to London, they did not think their business finished unless they had attended a Blackfriars lecture. The success of his ministry was also very great. It is said that thousands were converted and built up under his ministry.

Assessment of conversion was quite different in those days. A convert was one who demonstrated in his life that he was a new person in Christ. Today, simple "decisions" are reported as though they were conversions. Sadly, very few decisions can be equated with true conversion.

Gouge was a peaceable man and described as being the very picture of Moses for a meek and quiet spirit (Num 12:3; 1Pe 3:4). He was never observed by his family or by his servants to speak in anger with his wife. Yet in spite of his peaceable disposition, he was thrown into prison for nine weeks simply for republishing a book on the calling of the Jews. He was also persecuted for opposing the Arminianism and ritualism of Archbishop Laud.

An early riser throughout the year, Gouge was troubled if any person should be at their work before he was at his. He was a fervent believer in the Lord's Day, and made sure that his servants were able to have full profit from that day. He was deeply exercised about the welfare of overseas churches; he would weep, fast, and pray when he heard bad news of the suffering of believers in foreign countries.

William Gouge was a member of the Westminster Assembly and often filled the moderator's chair when that gentleman was absent. His most famous series of sermons was on the letter to the Hebrews. This 1,100 page, double column commentary has been republished by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, USA, and is a most practical and useful work.

C. *The Third Generation*

It is evident that the Puritan movement reached an apex from about 1640 to 1660, after which the number of gifted ministers declined. This apex is seen in the quality of written works during these times, and especially by very well-known Puritans who are noteworthy still. We will now consider brief biographies of the best known, such as Goodwin, Bridge, Manton, Charnock, Owen, Baxter, Bunyan, Flavel and Howe—all of whose *Complete Works* have been republished since about 1965. Thomas Watson is a favorite Puritan author on account of his easy-to-read colorful style and pithiness in doctrinal definition. His writings have not been gathered into one uniform set. I have included details of his principal works (not as footnotes but as part of his life) because his books are descriptive of his ministry.

Bunyan, Owen, and Baxter are the most famous of the Puritans. Jessey and Knollys, both Baptists, are less known. I have included them to illustrate the diversity of character that prevailed among these men. Jessey, out of devotion to his work, chose not to marry. He was exemplary in caring for the poor and, in addition, took measures to assist Jews in their practical needs. Knollys is included not only because of the exceptional nature of his versatile ministry, but because he was involved in both *The First and Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*.

1). Dr. Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679)

Thomas Goodwin^a has been accorded his doctorate of divinity title here only to distinguish him from another notable Puritan of the same name, who ministered in the county of Essex. Dr. Goodwin had the advantage of godly parents who secured for him the best classical education in the neighborhood, so that before he came to his thirteenth birthday he entered Christ's College, Cambridge. At that time, the whole of Cambridge was affected by the powerful ministry of William Perkins. Looking back on his experience, he maintained that, although he attended holy communion and was religious, he was legalistic in spiritual matters and unconverted. At the age of 20 he experienced deep conviction of sin under a sermon on Jesus' tears over Jerusalem (Luk 19:41-42). He testified that the Holy Spirit directed his focus away from looking within, to looking to Christ alone. This ended seven years of bondage for him. His own painful conviction had much to do with his becoming a preacher, which is exceedingly useful in the conversion of sinners and the guidance of enquirers.

^a See Goodwin's *The Vanity of Thoughts* and *How Faith Prepares the Soul for Christ* (tract), both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Following his conversion, Goodwin allied himself to the Puritan party. In due course, he followed Richard Sibbes as master of St. Catherine's College, Cambridge. Persecution intensified at this time and he resigned his position in 1634. We know that Goodwin settled for a while in Amsterdam, where he had fellowship with Nye, Burroughs, Bridge, and Sympson. Later, at the Westminster Assembly, these men, being Independents rather than Presbyterians, became known as the "dissenting brethren." At the Assembly, Nye was a powerful speaker, Burroughs an acute reasoner, Bridge a persuasive pleader, but Goodwin was the strength of the party. Such was the gracious and gentle character of Goodwin that even those who differed most from him regarded him with esteem. He was very close to Oliver Cromwell and ministered to him when he was dying.

In 1649 Goodwin was appointed president of Magdalene College, Oxford. He loved to assist young men in preparation for the ministry and, when in dark times he had left Cambridge, he confessed that he had not expected ever to recover such a position. With the return of royalty the political situation changed, and in 1660 Goodwin moved to London where he ministered steadfastly even through 1665, the year of the plague.^a In the following year, in the great fire,^b he lost half his library in the flames. This was the occasion of his writing a wonderful work with the title *Patience and Its Perfect Work under Sudden and Sore Trials* (Jam 1:4). I well remember an unforgettable impression being made on the Whitefield Fraternal in Sussex in the 1960s. About forty ministers were deeply moved when Ferrell Griswold described the sufferings of Christ: His physical and His spiritual sufferings. Pastor Griswold, deeply read in the Puritans, ascribed the power of those expositions to the writings of Thomas Goodwin.

Goodwin's writing, like his preaching, is experimental in tone. He wrote as he felt. Highly commended in Goodwin's works is his experimental exposition titled *The Return of Prayers*.

2). William Bridge (1600-1670)

Bridge was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he began his studies at age sixteen. He was evidently gifted in academic work and became a Fellow of the College, remaining there until the age of twenty-six. He ministered in Essex and then in Norwich as rector of St. Peter's. It was there that he was silenced by Bishop Wren for his non-conformity, and then excommunicated. This severe treatment drove him into exile, and he took refuge in Holland where he settled at Rotterdam. There he became pastor to the English Church and was associated with Jeremiah Burroughs. He re-

^a **plague** – The Great Plague was the last major epidemic of the bubonic plague to occur in England, lasting from 1665 to 1666. It killed an estimated 100,000 people—almost a quarter of London's population—in 18 months.

^b **great fire** – fire in London's central parts from September 2-6, 1666, which gutted everything inside the old Roman city wall. It destroyed 13,200 houses (housing 70,000 of the 80,000 inhabitants), 87 parish churches, St Paul's Cathedral, and most of the buildings of the City authorities. The death toll is unknown.

nounced the ordination that he had received in the Church of England and was re-ordained in the Independent style by Samuel Ward (1577-1639), a well-known Puritan of Suffolk who had suffered imprisonment for his faith.

William Bridge returned to England in 1642. He frequently preached before Parliament and was chosen as one of the members of the Westminster Assembly. He was called to be the minister of a church in Yarmouth, where he continued until ejected in 1662. His writings were gathered into five volumes in 1845 and republished by Soli Deo Gloria in 1989. Typical of the Puritans, he preached first and wrote his materials from those manuscripts. His style is richly experimental and practical, and often characterized by the most tender pastoral concern. This latter quality is seen especially in his most famous single piece of writing *A Lifting up for the Downcast*, which has been kept in print as a paperback by the Banner of Truth.

3). *Thomas Manton (1620-1677)*

Thomas Manton^a was privileged to have a father and both grandfathers as ministers. He was endowed with much natural ability and was ready for university at the early age of fourteen; but his parents kept him home for a further year before he entered Wadham College, Oxford. After basic studies, he concentrated on theology. He was ordained to the ministry by the famous Joseph Hall, then Bishop of Exeter. After a three year ministry in Devon, he moved to a church in Stoke Newington, London. Seven years later, he took over from the aged Obadiah Sedgwick^b at Covent Garden, where he continued until his death in 1677.

Manton had a high esteem for Christopher Love (1618-1651), a young minister who was executed by beheading in 1651 for allegedly conspiring with the royalist cause. Manton attended Mr. Love on the scaffold. We can admire the courage of Manton in preaching the funeral sermon of Love even though soldiers threatened to shoot him. Dr. Manton suffered imprisonment during the post-1662 period.

While he was minister at Covent Garden, many of high rank attended his ministry, and he was called at times to preach before Parliament. He became one of Oliver Cromwell's chaplains. An incident is on record which shows that the best men can fail at times. Manton was invited to preach before the Lord Mayor. He chose a difficult subject in which he could display his learning. For this the Lord rebuked him, in the form of a poor man who reproached him later that day, complaining that he had come to get food for his soul but was greatly disappointed. Dr. Manton was truly grieved and replied,

Friend, if I did not give you a sermon, you have given me one; and by the grace of God I will never play the fool to preach before my Lord Mayor in such a manner again!

^a See Manton's *A Treatise of Self-denial*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b **Obadiah Sedgwick** (1600-1658) – Presbyterian minister and member of the Westminster Assembly; born in Marlborough, Wiltshire, England.

Thomas Manton was a zealous believer in family worship. He began morning and evening with a short prayer, then read a chapter from the Bible, and required that his children and servants remember some part of it. He would then comment in an easy and pleasant style on what had been read, concluding with a longer prayer. He was ardent in the ministry on the Lord's Day, both in public worship and in his family, and was noted for the lively and affectionate way in which he administered the Lord's Supper. He rested on Mondays and received visitors.

In 1871, the complete works of Thomas Manton were republished. As part of the introduction, Bishop J. C. Ryle wrote an estimate of Manton in which he stated, "The Puritans, as a body, have done more to elevate the national character than any class of Englishmen that ever lived." A hundred years later a further edition of the 22 volume *Works* of Manton was published by Maranatha Publications in the USA. He was only thirty when his commentary on James was published. His commentaries on 2 Thesalonians 2:1-12, James, Jude, and Psalm 119 are particularly valuable.

4). *Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)*

Born in London, Stephen Charnock studied at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he experienced the saving change of salvation by grace. He took his first pastorate at Southwark in London.

Shortly after, age only 24, he was appointed to a senior position at New College, Oxford. This was followed by service in a high ranking family in Dublin.

Difficult days lay ahead, because the restoration of Charles II meant that Charnock was without a pastoral charge in London for fifteen years. He labored for a short period in a Congregational church before his death, at age only 52. Very little is known of his personal life. His title to fame lies in the excellence of his written works. The Banner of Truth has published three volumes of his discourses, including a wonderful series on the new birth. His most famous work is an extended series of expositions in four volumes, *The Existence and Attributes of God*.

Charnock's *Complete Works* were gathered and published in 1815. The editor wrote,

Holiness was the ornament of his life; usefulness the character of his ministry; the gospel he had so often preached the consolation of his dying hours.

5). *Thomas Watson (about 1620-1686)*

Thomas Watson's^a dates of birth and death are uncertain. We do know that he graduated from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1639 and a Master's degree in 1642. He was recognized as an excellent student. In 1646 he became the rector at St. Stephen's in the ward of Walbrook, London. He was implicated in Christopher Love's plot (referred to above) in 1651, spent six months in jail, and was

^a See Watson's *The Duty of Self-denial*, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, "Test of Assurance," and "Self-examination" (tracts); all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

then released. He was one of the ministers who suffered the notorious Great Ejection of 1662.

The church that he pastored was destroyed by the fire of 1666. After the Ejection, Watson preached wherever it was possible. Those who loved his preaching would gather in barns, kitchens, in back rooms, and in the woods to hear the Word of life. In 1675 he and Stephen Charnock licensed Crosby Hall for services. In 1686 Watson and his wife, Abigail, retired to Barnston in Essex, where her father was minister. The church building, designed in the old “meeting-house” style, still exists, and it was here that Watson was buried when he died while in prayer later that year.

Watson is highly esteemed as the most readable of the Puritans. He wrote in an original, concise, pithy, pungent, racy, rich, and illustrative style. Out of the heart proceeds character. It is in Watson’s writings that we detect a minister of superb quality.

The first book to be published in 1958 by the Banner of Truth Trust was Thomas Watson’s *A Body of Divinity*. That was followed by *The Lord’s Prayer* and *The Ten Commandments*. These books are based on the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The Banner has also published Watson’s *All Things for Good* (sometimes called *A Divine Cordial*) and *The Doctrine of Repentance*. There are two remaining treatises that have not been republished. One is *Jerusalem’s Glory*, a copy of which is at Dr. Williams’s Library in London. The other is *The Witnesses Anatomized*, the only known copy to exist being at Dulwich College in London.

Don Kistler, founder of Soli Deo Gloria, has majored on publishing the writings of Watson. The following are included: *The Sermons of Thomas Watson (A Christian on the Mount, The Saints’ Spiritual Delight, The Christian’s Charter of Privileges, God’s Anatomy of Man’s Heart, A Christian on Earth Still in Heaven, Christ’s Loveliness, The Upright Man’s Character, The One Thing Necessary, The Godly Man Drawn with a Scripture Pencil); The Art of Divine Contentment; Gleanings from Thomas Watson; Heaven Taken by Storm; A Plea for the Godly* (17 previously unpublished sermons by Watson), *The Duty of Self-Denial*,^a and ten other sermons; *The Mischief of Sin* (appended is Watson’s treatise on *The Mystery of the Lord’s Supper*); *The Fight of Faith Crowned* (the remaining sermons of Thomas Watson).

6). John Owen (1616-1683)

John Owen^b is deservedly known as “The Prince of the Puritans.” His *Works* are first choice for those who prize sound divinity. Today his writings are available in 25 volumes; these together form the best source of theology in the English language. Owen is also called the King David of the Puritans. We can ascribe this to his overall reliability. He wrote books in response to the challenges and pressures of his times. But in all his writings there is power and cohesion of thought, and always total faithfulness to the

^a *The Duty of Self-denial*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b See Owen’s *Mortification of Sin, Temptation, Indwelling Sin, Church Discipline, and Worship and Order in the Church*; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

authority of Scripture. Many examples can be cited in which Owen is unrivalled for balance and penetration of thought. One example is his great work on *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (*Works*, volume 3); others are *The Glory of Christ* (volume 1), *The Mortification of Sin* (volume 6). His writing on *Liberty of Conscience* (volume 13) is as relevant now as it was in his time.

Of Welsh noble background, Owen was so brilliant in intellect that he was sent to Oxford University at the age of twelve. There he studied for ten years. He enjoyed hurling the javelin and competed in the long jump. He also played the flute. His nature as an intense scholar was such that sometimes he allowed himself only four hours' sleep a night; that kind of daily program does not make for Olympic champions!

While on a visit to London, Owen and some of his friends went to hear the famous preacher Edmund Calamy. They were disappointed when Calamy did not arrive. He was replaced by a country preacher. The Holy Spirit used the visitor to bring Owen to personal assurance of salvation.

Owen's first pastorate was at Fordham, a village in Essex. At that time he married Mary Rooke. His family life was immensely sorrowful in a way we can scarcely understand in our day of modern medical science. Of eleven children, only one, a girl, survived into adulthood. Her marriage did not work out; she returned to her parents and shortly afterwards died of consumption.^a

In 1646, Owen was called to a London congregation where 2,000 attended each Lord's Day. In June 1648 General Fairfax besieged Colchester, and Owen was invited to preach to the soldiers. He became friends with many of the officers, including Oliver Cromwell's son-in-law Henry Ireton. Owen's gifts were soon recognized. He was invited to minister before Parliament where he became the favorite preacher, and was appointed chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. In 1652 he was installed as vice-chancellor of Oxford University. This position involved a wide range of administrative responsibilities. During his six years of tenure he made theology, preaching, catechism, and prayer central. The discipline at Oxford was poor, and Owen was effective in his work—being tolerant but firm. There was an incident when a student uttered obscenities in a debate. He was warned but he continued. Finally, Owen himself thrust the student physically from the room!

In 1658, Owen took part in a meeting of ministers from Congregational churches. This conference took place at the Savoy Palace in London. He was appointed—with Dr. Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, William Bridge, William Greenhill, and Joseph Caryl (all of whom had been members of the Westminster Assembly)—to prepare a confession of faith for the Congregational churches based on *The Westminster Confession*. This became known as *The Savoy Declaration*.

^a **consumption** – pulmonary tuberculosis that wastes the body.

In 1676 Owen lost his excellent wife by death. Eighteen months later he remarried. His second wife was a woman of wealth. By this time his health was failing, and he was able to enjoy the luxury of a carriage for travel.

Owen's writings reveal an analytical, formative, and majestic mind. Foundational to all his works is a profound grasp of the doctrines of grace. The depth and length of Owen's work is the subject of Sinclair Ferguson's^a book *John Owen on the Christian Life*. After describing the life and ministry of Owen, Ferguson expounds his teaching on the covenants, sanctification, communion with God, conflict with sin, fellowship in the church, the doctrine of Scripture, apostasy, perseverance, and initiation into covenant life and the Lord's Table. The Banner of Truth has published excellent transpositions into modern English of some of Owen's works. These are popular paperbacks abridged and modernized by R. J. K. Law: *The Holy Spirit, Communion with God, Apostasy from the Gospel*, and *The Glory of Christ*.

In 1661 Owen wrote, in Latin, a treatise on biblical theology—an overview of the history of God's revelation of Himself to mankind. The importance of biblical theology has been championed this century by authors such as Geerhardus Vos, and more recently Graeme Goldsworthy. Three centuries ago John Owen anticipated the centrality of this subject. We are indebted to Soli Deo Gloria for the translation from Latin of Owen's work on the nature and progress of theology, which reveals a delightfully lucid style, like the clearest mountain stream. As J. I. Packer puts it, "His Latin is taut, clear, brisk, and tidy." What a pity he did not write all his works in Latin, and then have them translated into English!

7). *Richard Baxter (1615-1691)*

Unlike many Puritan leaders who enjoyed the advantage of education in the prestigious universities of Cambridge or Oxford, Baxter^b had to find his own way educationally. By dint of self-discipline, he acquired learning that put him on a par with the best Puritan writers.

He was ordained in the Church of England and called to minister in Kidderminster. When he arrived, the place was a spiritual desert. He set about his work of visiting and evangelism with incredible zeal. This was used to bring about a marvellous change in the town and necessitated a greatly enlarged auditorium. The Puritans did not use the word "revival." Perhaps this work of God's Spirit might be better termed "a visitation of the Spirit." There was something about what happened in Kidderminster that has stimulated and fired the imagination and fervency of believers ever since.

Baxter married in 1662. His wife, Margaret, was a woman of outstanding spiritual and natural talent, and after her death Baxter wrote her biography. Dr. Packer eulogi-

^a **Sinclair Ferguson** – Scottish Presbyterian pastor and theologian known for his teaching and writing. He is visiting Professor of Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

^b See Baxter's *Directions for Profitable Hearing and Reading* and "Self-losing" (tract); both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

zes this biography and suggests that it helps to destroy the caricature that Puritans were not human. Baxter, more than most, experienced persecution and was subject to imprisonment after the Great Ejection.

During the Civil War, Baxter became chaplain to a regiment with Cromwell's forces. For about 25 years following the Great Ejection of 1662, Baxter was a leading spokesman for the Non-conformists. He was essentially comprehensive in his approach, seeking to keep the various streams together as much as possible. But as a leader in the wider field, he was as poor as he was successful on the pastoral side. In May 1685 Baxter was charged before the Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys on account of his criticisms of the Church of England. Jeffreys, notorious for his hatred of all Puritanism, raved against Baxter and called him "an old rogue who poisoned the world with his Kidderminster doctrine...a conceited, stubborn, fanatical dog!" Jeffreys also expressed his desire that Baxter be hanged! Had it not been for the influence brought to bear by more reasonable men of power, Baxter might have been whipped through the streets.

During the time when he was silenced in his preaching ministry, he concentrated on writing. His *Christian Directory* is unique inasmuch as it covers every aspect of Christian life from a practical point of view. It is the great "How To" book of the Puritans. How does the Christian relate to God, to himself, his family, his church, his work, and his nation? With a normal size page, this would come to about 2,000 pages! It is all practical and helpful, and provides a guide for us today. We need to cover all these practical basic subjects such as marriage and the family today, but at the same time grapple with a different set of social problems. The biblical principles are the same, but the application needs to be contemporary.

Richard Baxter's evangelistic book, *A Call to the Unconverted*, was a best-seller. Its usefulness continues today. The British evangelist, John Blanchard, has transposed it into modern English and called it *An Invitation to Live* (Evangelical Press). Baxter's outline of Ezekiel 33:11 is extraordinarily perceptive and gripping, typically Puritan. Another outright winner is Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*. If he attained in pastoral work anything like the standards set in this classic, it is little wonder that he was wonderfully used at Kidderminster. Another famous best-seller was Baxter's *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*. Baxter's reputation as a Christian writer is based on his devotional and pastoral expositions rather than his works on theological themes.

In his theology, Baxter was individualistic, eccentric, and disinclined to submit to others. His errors are not easily detected. In reading the books recommended above, we need to learn how to benefit from writers while at the same time avoiding their errors. Packer, who is an expert on the Puritans and very especially so on Baxter, says of him,

Baxter was a great and saintly man. As pastor, evangelist, and devotional writer, no praise for him can be too high. But as a theologian he was, though brilliant, something of a disaster. He was Neonomian and Amyraldian.^a

This was the cause of doctrinal confusion in the next generation. Those ramifications are beyond our scope, but from Baxter's example we are reminded that great care is required in theological formulation. This is precisely why John Owen is so highly valued.

Baxter was not only concerned for evangelism at home. He was just as zealous for missionary work and was a moving power in the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. John Eliot, famous as the apostle to the American Indians, found in Baxter a sterling supporter. In his last illness, Baxter read the *Life of Eliot* and wrote to the author, Increase Mather,

I thought I had been near dying at twelve o'clock in bed; but your book revived me. I knew much of Mr. Eliot's opinions by many letters that I had from him. There was no man on earth I honored above him. It is his evangelical work that is the apostolic succession for which I plead.

8). *John Bunyan (1628-1688)*

In spiritual experience, in doctrine, in preaching style, and in life, John Bunyan^b is *the* perfect exemplar of the Puritans.

Born at Elstow, near Bedford, of very poor but respectable parents, Bunyan received a very limited education. At 16 he lost his mother, and a month after that his sister. Within a month his father remarried. Bunyan became wild and wilful. We know little of Bunyan's army experience, but at the age of 16 he was recruited into the army by the Parliamentary forces for between two and three years.

John Bunyan's testimony of conversion is described in his book *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. Having heard a sermon on the importance of the Lord's Day, he went home burdened in spirit. However, he sallied out to join in a game of "cat." As he was in process of striking the stick, he seemed to hear a voice from heaven, "Will you leave your sins and go to heaven, or have your sins and go to hell?" He left the game at once and said he saw the Lord Jesus looking down on him. Yet for all that, he returned

^a **Neonomianism** (*Greek*: new law) – in Christian theology, the doctrine that the gospel is a new law, the requirements of which humanity fulfills by faith, repentance, and imperfect obedience, which are substituted in the room of the perfect and perpetual obedience required by the original Moral Law.

Amyraldism (Amyraldianism; also known as the School of Saumur) – doctrinal system known as post-redemptionism, moderate Calvinism, four-point Calvinism, or hypothetical universalism: God ineffectually decrees that all men be saved; but because God knows that some men will not have faith, He makes an effectual decree to save those whom He predestines to salvation.

^b See Bunyan's *Christian Behavior*, *The Barren Figtree*, *Heavenly Footman*, *Family Duty*, *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness*, *The Saints' Knowledge of Christ's Love*, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Part One); all available online (and in print in North America) from CHAPEL LIBRARY. In addition, many other Bunyan titles are available online at www.ChapelLibrary.org.

to his habit of playing on the Sabbath and continued unconverted. Later, overhearing some women speaking about the new birth, he was convicted once more. These same women introduced him to their pastor in Bedford, an excellent man named John Gifford. He was instrumental in leading Bunyan to repentance and faith.

Bunyan's writing style is powerful, and his use of English is a delight to every reader. All the phases of prevenient grace^a appear in *Grace Abounding*: knowledge, illumination (Bunyan never argued with election and predestination or any other Christian doctrine), reformation of life, and conviction of sin.

In 1653 Bunyan became a church member, and a year later moved to Bedford with his wife and four children, all under six years of age. In 1655 he became a deacon of the church and began to preach. At that time his wife died. In 1660 he was arrested and imprisoned for preaching. Some time before this, a godly young woman agreed to marry him. Although his second wife cared for his children, Bunyan was much needed at home. It was agonizing, but he refused to compromise his conscience and preferred imprisonment rather than attending the Church of England or quitting his preaching. Twelve years of confinement in prison ensued, from the age of 32 to 44. He especially loved his blind daughter, who would come to the prison to work with him to tag shoelaces, in this way to help feed the family.

In prison, where he wrote many fine works, his library consisted of his Bible, a concordance, and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. In 1674 he was arrested again for preaching the gospel. At that time he began his best known work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a masterpiece and best-seller of all time, second only to the Bible. After the Scriptures, it is usually the next book to be translated into other languages. Thankfully, through the influence and intervention of John Owen, Bunyan was released and saved from a further long term in prison.

As with John Rogers of Dedham, an extraordinary unction attended the preaching of John Bunyan. Overall, he was the most imaginative, eloquent, and compelling preacher of his time. His use of allegory was unique. John Owen said that he would gladly trade all his learning if he could only preach like Bunyan. When he visited London, his preaching drew thousands rather than hundreds. The sheer gripping power of Bunyan's preaching of the gospel is illustrated in his sermons, *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*, *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, and *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*. The latter is on John 6:37. It combines the election of the Father with powerful persuasions to sinners to close with Christ, on the basis that if they come they must know that Christ will never cast them out. His theology was robust, and his written works enjoyed popularity equal to any of his peers. In the sermon *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, Bunyan enacts the various objections made by the sinners of Jerusalem, disarms those ob-

^a **prevenient grace** – divine grace that precedes human decision; God's work in drawing the sinner to Himself (Joh 6:44).

jections, and persuades to faith in Christ—stressing throughout, “Repent and be baptized every one of you” (Act 2:38)!

Objector: “But I was one of them that cried out, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! And desired that Barabbas, the murderer, might live, rather than Him. What will become of me, think you?”

Peter: “I am to preach repentance and remission of sins to every one of you!” (see Luk 24:47).

I remember hearing a certain Mr. Ford who had a fine deep voice and, oddly enough, looked like John Bunyan. He made a special study of Bunyan and memorized sections of Bunyan’s sermons. In a lecture at the Evangelical Library in London, he acted out Bunyan’s preaching. He included the sermon *The Barren Fig Tree, Being the Doom and Downfall of the Fruitless Professor*. Bunyan depicts the deathbed of the fruitless professor, at the same time depicting the cutting down of the barren fig tree. I do not think I have ever in my life heard anything as awesome as that.

Bunyan’s complete works have been published in three handsome large illustrated volumes by the Banner of Truth Trust.

9). *John Flavel (1627-1691)*

Flavel^a was born of godly parents who died together in 1665 of the plague while in prison in London for their faith. John was educated at Oxford, after which he became a curate at Deptford. He was deprived of his living in 1662 by the *Act of Uniformity*, and subsequently, under much persecution, labored as a Non-conformist pastor in Dartmouth. He enjoyed exceptional unction in prayer, and on one occasion wrestled with agonized pleading in public prayer for those going into a sea battle from Dartmouth. The Lord answered his prayer in that there was not one casualty among those who engaged in the battle. His labors were crowned with many conversions, some of which were extraordinary.

It is for his writing that he is now remembered. His works were published in six volumes in 1820. Again in 1968 these were published in handsome volumes by the Banner of Truth. Typical of the Puritans, all his works in writing were first in sermon form. Flavel’s writings are of outstanding quality. Most compelling is his exposition of Revelation 3:20,

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Eleven superb expositions of Proverbs 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life,” total about 260 pages. Best known of all Flavel’s writings is his *The Mystery of Providence*, a popular paperback published by the Banner of Truth. Of prime place in his works is *The Fountain of Life*, expositions on the life and sayings of Christ.

^a See Flavel’s *The Fountain of Life Opened* (excerpt), available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

10). *Hanserd Knollys (1599-1691)*

Like John Bunyan, Hanserd Knollys was a Puritan. Like Bunyan, he was a Baptist. Through Knollys, Baptists today can trace their own historical connections to the vast and rich legacy of the Puritan testimony and the inheritance of Puritan literature.

Knollys died at the advanced age of 93. His life spans the 17th century. He was one of seven who signed *The First London Baptist Confession of Faith* in 1646, and his name is the first of 37 to record agreement and unity in the publication of *The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* in 1689. Indeed, although advanced in age, Knollys was a prime mover in organizing a National Assembly of Calvinistic Baptists on the occasion of the accession to the throne of William III and the passing of the *Toleration Act* in 1689. *The 1689 Confession* was actually formulated in 1677, but persecution prevented it from being published. This Confession follows *The Westminster Confession* in all chapters, except four that concern believers' baptism, the nature of the church, and church government.

Hanserd Knollys was one of the few Baptists in the line of the Puritans who received a university education. He studied at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge. He testified, I prayed daily, heard all the godly ministers I could, read and searched the holy Scriptures, read good books, and got acquainted with gracious Christians then called Puritans.

Knollys was ordained and appointed minister of a parish in Lincolnshire. He resigned in 1631 because of Puritan convictions. He could not in good conscience follow the rituals required, and could not agree to "admitting wicked persons to the Lord's Supper."

Benjamin Brook devotes eleven pages to Knollys in his three volume work *The Lives of the Puritans*. Brook writes,

About the year 1636, Knollys left the Church [of England] entirely. He renounced his Episcopal ordination and joined himself to the Puritans. This exposed him to numerous difficulties and hardships. He was driven out of Lincolnshire and, at length out of the kingdom for his non-conformity.

When he arrived in America, he had no money; but his wife, unknown to him, had saved five pounds.

In 1641 he returned to England in poverty; but he opened a school, which after a year was attended by 156 scholars. It was at this time that he associated with the Calvinistic Baptists. Knollys was a courageous preacher. On one of his preaching tours in Suffolk he was stoned. During the 1640s, Knollys was a leading apologist in defending the Reformed position (as held by John Calvin and Martin Bucer) from the fanatical claims of the Seekers. Their claims were the same as those of extreme charismatics today. The Seekers claimed that because of apostasy God had withdrawn signs, wonders, miracles, raising of the dead, and prophecies. Knollys' very able defense of the orthodox position—that the apostolic age and apostolic gifts (Heb 2:4; 2Co 12:12) were unique—was set out in his book *The Shining of a Flaming Fire in Zion*.

Knollys maintained that James 5:14 is our guide in the case of special need. He himself possessed an unusual faith and gift of prayer seen in many remarkable petitions, especially during the time of the great plague. Toward the end of Knollys' life, the famous leader Benjamin Keach^a was taken ill to the point of death. Knollys visited him and implored the Lord to spare him in the same way that he had spared King Hezekiah. Keach recovered and lived another fifteen years.

During the unsettled time of 1660, Knollys was imprisoned for 18 weeks in Newgate Prison. Later, when he was in Holland, his property was confiscated. He opened a school again in order to recover financially. He was imprisoned again in 1670. He possessed exceptional bodily stamina. In prison he would preach every day. Out of prison, he preached three or four times every Lord's Day and many times during the week. He was noted for the cheerfulness and courage in which he bore persecutions and sufferings. Right to the end of his life, he was actively encouraging his flock and advancing the wider cause of Christ.

11). *Henry Jessey (1601-1663)*

In his *History of the Puritans*, Daniel Neal describes Henry Jessey as "an eminent divine among the Puritans." He was born in 1601 near Cleveland, Yorkshire, where his father was minister. At seventeen years of age, he was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge. When his father died in 1623, Jessey was left with only three pence a day to live on. While at university, he showed mastery in the biblical languages and later, with friends, set himself to translate the whole Bible. This enterprise, though almost completed, did not result in publication. It was said of Jessey that the original languages of the Old and New Testament were as familiar to him as his mother tongue. After leaving Cambridge, he worked as a chaplain in an aristocratic home. He was ordained in 1627. In 1633 he took the living of Aughton in Yorkshire. Soon he was in trouble. His Puritan convictions caused him to take down a crucifix, and he refused to follow the prescribed order of service. He was dismissed, but thereafter received into the home of Sir Matthew Bointon in Yorkshire, from where he preached frequently in two parishes.

In 1635, Jessey was invited to be pastor of the congregation formed in 1616 by Henry Jacob. He continued in this position until his death. A number in the congregation had accepted believers' baptism and this stirred Jessey to study the subject. Neal says,

After great deliberation, many prayers, and frequent conferences with pious and learned friends, he altered his sentiments—first concerning the mode, and then the subjects of baptism. But he maintained the same temper of friendship and charity towards other Christians, not only as to conversation, but church-communion. When he visited churches in the north and west of England, he labored to promote the spirit of love and union among them. He was a principal person in setting up and maintaining, for some time, a meeting of some eminent men of each denomination in London.

^a **Benjamin Keach** (1640-1704) – important Particular Baptist preacher, author, and defender of Baptist principles. His name is associated with the Baptist Catechism, which was modified by Spurgeon and still in use today; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

In June 1645 he was baptized by Hanserd Knollys. In London, in addition to his own pastorate, he ministered regularly at St. George's Church, Southwark, and at other places during the week.

He deliberately chose to be single so that he could devote his life to serving others. Perhaps his experience of extreme poverty as a student was partly responsible for his sympathy for and amazing generosity to the poor. Thirty poor families received their support from him. So remarkable was his passion to help the needy that he collected £300 (a large sum in those days) for Jews in desperate need in Jerusalem. With this gift he sent letters of concern. Later he wrote a treatise proving that Jesus is the true Messiah. This was prepared in Hebrew for distribution among Jews wherever they may be found.

Upon the Restoration, he was ejected from his position at St. George's. He was silenced in his ministry and committed to prison. About six months later, he died full of peace and joy. Neal reports that several thousand from many different persuasions attended his funeral.

12). *John Howe (1630-1705)*

John Howe was a graduate of Cambridge and Oxford. At the early age of 26, he became a domestic chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. In 1662 he was ejected from Torrington in Devon and subsequently became one of the foremost leaders of Non-conformity.

For several years before a call in 1671 to Antrim in Ireland, Howe struggled to support his increasing family. The call was to become chaplain to Lord Massarene. Howe was described by a friend as an incomparable preacher, and this is illustrated by an incident on the journey to Ireland. Bad weather delayed the ship, and Howe was invited to preach in the town. A large crowd gathered. Such was the impact made that the next week, when the ship was still delayed, a huge crowd gathered. Although Howe was ill, he sought the Lord's enablement and preached again with great freedom. He testified that never in his experience had he seen a congregation so moved or receiving the Word with such pleasure. Permission was obtained—without Howe having to compromise his principles of Non-conformity—to preach every Lord's Day in the parish church at Antrim.

In 1675 he was called to a church in London. Some of his sermons created much interest, and after his death his principal works were gathered together for publication in two volumes in 1724. In 1990 Soli Deo Gloria published Howe's writings in three volumes. These include two of his most famous expositions, *Delighting in God*, and *The Redeemer's Tears Shed over Lost Souls*. Somehow fifteen sermons on Ezekiel by Howe were missed in this three volume set first published in 1848. They were reprinted separately by the Religious Tract Society under the title *The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit* with a subtitle *The Prosperous State of the Christian Interest Before the End of Time, by a Plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit*.

13). *Other well known Puritans*

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews expressed his dilemma as he described believers in the Old Testament. His dilemma concerned omission. There were so many worthy characters who excelled in the exercise of their faith; he mentions the names of just a few and then has to leave it (Heb 11:32). Many worthy Puritans have not been described in this book because of space. It will help at this point to mention some of the better known of these.

William Ames (1576-1633) took refuge in Holland, where he spent most of his ministerial career. His book *The Marrow of Theology* was extraordinarily popular, especially in New England. Some of the better known New England Puritans were Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepherd, John Davenport, Increase Mather, and Cotton Mather.

Among the Puritans who participated in the Westminster Assembly were William Twisse (chairman), Anthony Burgess, Edmund Calamy, Joseph Caryl, Simeon Ashe, Philip Nye, Obadiah Sedgwick, and Stephen Marshall. Daniel Cawdrey and Herbert Palmer were delegated the task of writing of the Sabbath, on which subject they produced two volumes. There were five representatives from Scotland at the Assembly, among whom were Samuel Rutherford and Alexander Henderson.

William Gurnall is famous for his classic *The Christian in Complete Armour*, William Jenkyn for his commentary on Jude, Thomas Taylor for his on Titus, and Richard Alleine for his book *Heaven Opened*. The Northern Puritan Isaac Ambrose was well known, especially for his classic *Looking unto Jesus*. Oliver Heywood, also of Northern England, kept diaries that form a valuable source of information about the Puritan way of life.

Matthew Poole (1624-1679) is renowned on account of his complete commentary on the Bible, as is Matthew Henry for his commentary on the whole Bible.^a The latter was the son of the Puritan Philip Henry. John Owen was followed in his last pastorate in London by David Clarkson, whose writings have been republished in three volumes.

Christopher Love (1618-1651), a wonderfully gifted young Welsh preacher, was executed in 1651 by beheading at age 33. He was charged for being involved in raising money to restore the monarchy. Arrested at the same time on suspicion of conspiracy were Puritan pastors Thomas Watson, William Jenkyn, and Ralph Robinson; but they were released. Ralph Robinson's sermons on the glory of Christ have been republished. He said once to an intimate friend that he loved fasting and prayer with all his heart

Some well know Puritans died young: James Janeway at 38 and the very able and popular preacher John Preston at 31. In Scotland, gifted preaching and writing Puritans James Durham died at the age of 36 and Hugh Binning at only 26. Joseph Alleine

^a **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) – Presbyterian preacher and author. His *Exposition of the Old and New Testament* (1710) easily holds first place among devotional commentaries for its blending of good sense, original and felicitous remark, and genuine insight into the meaning of the sacred writers. See also *The Lord's Supper*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

departed to be with Christ when he was only 34. He is famous on account of the popularity of his book *An Alarm to the Unconverted*. Hundreds of editions have been published.

3. The Demise of the Puritan Movement

As we saw in “The Story of the Puritans,” an act was passed in 1662 that demanded conformity to the Church of England. Clergymen who had not been episcopally ordained^a were to be re-ordained. Consent was required to every part of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Every minister was required to take the oath of canonical obedience, and to renounce *The Solemn League and Covenant*, which was a pledge for reformation usually printed alongside *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and *The Westminster Catechisms*. The new *Act of Uniformity* was aimed to ensure that reformation be renounced.

Of course, the consciences of the Puritans could not submit to these requirements. About 2,000—nearly all ministers, but also men who held positions of authority, like headmasters and teachers in schools—were forced out of their occupations. To avoid destitution they had to resort to any kind of work they could find. It was a terrible time.

It was the end of Puritanism as such. A new era known as “Dissent” began. By the end of the seventeenth century, the demise of Puritanism was complete. Of the well-known Puritans who saw the eighteenth century were John Howe (died 1705), whose life we have just reviewed, and Thomas Doolittle (died 1707). Matthew Henry, famous for his commentary on the whole Bible, was the son of Philip Henry (1631-1696), one of the Puritans ejected in 1662.^b Matthew, who for a while studied under Thomas Doolittle in Islington, London, was born in 1662 and died in 1714.

The sufferings caused by the Great Ejection of 1662, and the severe and relentless persecution that ensued until 1688, broke up the unity of the evangelicals and severely restricted the benefits of a well-trained ministry. Non-conformists were barred from the universities; this had an adverse effect on the standards of the ministry. The cogent spiritual unity of the Puritans that had characterized their ministries went into steep decline after 1662. The Calvinism of the Puritans had been well-balanced and evangelistic. After the 1662 Ejection, Arminianism began to predominate in the churches; and in due course, that gave way to Unitarianism.^c Those faithful pastors who were ejected continued to write, but when that generation of great leaders passed away, there were few to take their place.

^a **episcopally ordained** – officially authorized to minister in the Church of England by one of its bishops (who supervised parish priests within his district).

^b See *Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry* in two volumes (416 pages and 310 pages); republished in one volume by Banner of Truth in 1974.

^c **Unitarianism** – heretical theological movement holding that God is one person, in direct contrast to the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. It also rejects several other orthodox Christian doctrines, including original sin, predestination, and biblical inerrancy.

The Church of England has never recovered from the Ejection of 1662. From time to time there have been exceptional leaders, like Bishop J. C. Ryle (1816-1900). Ryle followed the emphases of the Puritans and wrote like a Puritan. His well-known book *Holiness* provides expository material on the Puritan doctrine of sanctification.

The brightest son born to Puritanism in the nineteenth century was C. H. Spurgeon, and in the 20th Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Spurgeon was steeped in and fashioned by the writings and principles of the Puritans, and can only be understood in that light.¹ Puritanism went into steep decline and was almost extinct for the first half of the twentieth century. Spurgeon anticipated this decline when he declared,

Out of the present contempt into which Puritanism has fallen, many brave hearts and true will fetch it, by the help of God, ere many years have passed. Those who have daubed up the windows will yet be surprised to see heaven's light breaking forth from it to their own confusion.²

Interest in the Puritans and their literature began to spread in the late 1950s and has increased since. Without a theological renewal, this would not have been possible.³ Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' interest in the Puritans was first awakened in 1925 when he read a biography of Richard Baxter. Dr. Lloyd-Jones propagated interest in the Puritans on a wide scale. His papers delivered at the annual Puritan Conference, nineteen in all, have been printed in a volume with the title *The Puritans*.⁴

Dr. James I. Packer has contributed much to encourage interest in the Puritans. As a first year student at Oxford in 1944, he was appointed a junior librarian to assess and house a Puritan library that had been donated to the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union. It was then he discovered the 24 volume set of John Owen. The pages were uncut. The contents were summarized on the spines. In order to read about mortification of sin, Packer first cut his way into volume six. That was his rediscovery of the Puritans. Later he wrote a doctoral thesis on Richard Baxter. In due course, Packer's contribution toward a revival of interest in the Puritans was immense. His work on the Puritans is gathered together in his book *Among God's Giants*.⁵

Puritanism brings together in beautiful proportion the precious truths of Scripture: a proportion of doctrine, experience, and practice that exalts Jesus Christ, Who is the Truth (Joh 14:6). It is the will of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. For this reason, we can be sure that the promises will be fulfilled, as Isaiah and Habakkuk declare,

The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly...For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Isa 60:22; Hab 2:14).

References

¹ Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon – Heir of the Puritans* (Eerdmans, 1968), p 7.

² C. H. Spurgeon, *The Early Years* (Banner of Truth, 1962), p 11.

³ For a description of this renewal, see Robert Oliver's Evangelical Library publication *Our Glorious Heritage – The Recovery of the Reformed Faith in the Twentieth Century*; and article "The Theological Renewal 1950-2000," Erroll Hulse, *Reformation Today* 162.

⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans* (Banner of Truth, 417 pages, 1987).

⁵ J. I. Packer, *Among God's Giants – Aspects of Puritan Christianity* (Kingsway, 442 pages, 1991).

PART THREE

HELP FROM THE PURITANS

1. The Westminster Confession and Justification

The Westminster Confession of Faith forms the doctrinal basis of many Presbyterian denominations. Its equivalents, *The 1689 London Baptist Confession* and *The Savoy Confession* (Congregational), have been adopted by Reformed Baptist and Congregational churches.

Beside serving as a doctrinal basis for local churches, the Puritan confessions serve to give a sense of historical continuity. A confession of faith provides a useful teaching aid to ensure that the whole counsel of God's Word is preached. The Puritan confessions can be useful to express the unity of Reformed churches, which was the original principal purpose of *The 1689 London Baptist Confession*. A confession is also a means by which doctrinal integrity can be maintained. It was the grief of Charles Haddon Spurgeon during the Downgrade controversy of 1887 to 1892 that the Baptist Union would have nothing to do with defining doctrine. It is impossible to defend the truth without being definitive. We will see how important clarity and definition are as we take up justification by faith, which is God's way of salvation.

We can gain help from many chapters in the Puritan confessions, but here because of its cardinal^a place we will examine justification and observe its relevance for today.

A. *Justification by Faith Alone*

1). What Justification Is

From their writings, we can see that the Reformers and Puritans regarded justification as *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*, "the point on which depends the standing or falling of the Church." Enshrined in the heart of Protestant confessions of faith, especially those mentioned above, is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. It would be difficult to find any Puritan as eloquent on justification as Luther, but in principle they followed him. Thomas Watson asserted that "justification is the very hinge and pillar of Christianity,"¹ and John Owen found time to expound and defend the doctrine in a four hundred-page treatise.²

Luther declared,

This is the chief article from which all other doctrines have flowed ... It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the Church of God: and without it the Church

^a **cardinal** – of most importance.

cannot exist for one hour...When the article of justification has fallen, everything has fallen.³

The reason for this is that justification is the only way of salvation. To be obscure at this point is to open the door to darkness and confusion. Justification by faith alone concerns the very character and attributes of God, because justification shows that God requires perfect holiness. Justification directly concerns all the work of Christ, since the righteousness that is imputed to the believer consists of the active and passive obedience^a of our Redeemer.

The Westminster Confession (transposed into modern English) defines justification as follows:

God freely justifies the persons whom He effectually calls. He does this, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and by accounting them and accepting them as righteous. This He does for Christ's sake alone and not for anything wrought in them or done by them. The righteousness which is imputed to them—that is, reckoned to their account—is neither their faith, nor the act of believing, nor any obedience to the gospel which they have rendered, but Christ's obedience alone. Christ's one obedience is twofold: His active obedience rendered to the entire divine Law, and His passive obedience rendered in His death.

The confession goes on to assert,

The faith that receives and rests on Christ and His righteousness is the sole means of justification. Yet it is never alone in the person justified, but is invariably accompanied by all other saving graces.

The Puritans maintained firmly the necessity of clarity and the primacy of forensic justification,^b yet they constantly maintained the juxtaposition of justification and sanctification.

In Romans chapter 6, Paul deals with the objection made to justification; namely, if a person is forgiven all his sins past, present, and future, and is justified once and for all, will that not make him careless? Will he not say, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound" (Rom 6:1)? The answer Paul provides is that union with Christ simultaneously brings both justification *and* sanctification. The moment a person is joined to Christ by faith, he receives righteousness, which is the ground of his justification. At the same time, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within him to commence the work of holiness. Any person united to Christ will have both justification that is forensic,^c external and perfect (positional sanctification), and sanctification that is experimental, internal and imperfect (progressive sanctification). Hence, James insists that

^a **active and passive obedience** – Christ's active obedience consists of His keeping the whole Law during His earthly life. His passive obedience consists of His making the perfect sacrifice at the cross.

^b **forensic justification** – legal declaration of righteousness as in a court of law.

^c **forensic** – legal in a court of law.

any justified person must produce good works as a proof of the reality of his faith (Jam 2:26).

The clearest definition of justification is found in *The Westminster Larger Catechism*:

Question 70: What is justification?

Answer: Justification is an act of God's free grace to sinners, in which He pardons all their sins and accepts them as righteous in His sight; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ imputed to them by God, and received by faith alone.

2). *Justification and Sanctification*

Having surveyed the Puritan teaching, we will summarize the doctrine by comparing justification and sanctification, both of which are brought into existence simultaneously as the believer is united to Christ by faith.

The Puritans set us an example in upholding the following four principles necessary for a healthy doctrine of justification.

a). *Justification in the context of all of Scripture*

Justification must be kept in context of Scripture as a whole. Abraham was justified by faith: Abram "believed in the LORD; and he counted [i.e., credited] it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Abraham is a prototype for all who believe, which is why he is called "the father of all them that believe" (Rom 4:11). Note that righteousness is not infused^a into Abraham, but rather is credited to his account (imputation). Abraham, as the prototype of justification, is taken up by Paul (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6) and by James (2:23). Noah is described as an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith (Heb 11:7), and so preceded Abraham, as did Abel (Heb 11:4). But for clarity, Abraham is the primary model referred to in the New Testament.

The letter to the Romans introduces God's salvation as the good news that is the revelation from heaven of God's righteousness which saves. It is a righteousness that He puts to the account of every one who believes (Rom 1:16-17). This righteousness was procured by the propitiation^b of Christ's death (Rom 3:25). Paul demonstrates that this way of justifying sinners was not new; it is the way Abraham and David were justified (Rom 4:1-8). The words used to describe justification are words used in a law court.

Paul's explanation of justification is expressed in three epistles. Justification is unfolded systematically in Romans, defended in Galatians, and extolled in Philippians (Phi 3:4-11). Paul declares that if anyone could have followed the way of human merit, he

^a **infused** – poured into.

^b **propitiation** – Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To propitiate is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice. (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382)

could, because with regard to the Law he was legalistically faultless—but he came to regard all his self-righteousness as rubbish.

To the question put by Job, “How should man be just with God?” (Job 9:2), only two ways are known. The first is self-justification on account of good works of one kind or another. The second is God’s justification on account of the righteousness that He has provided in His Son. Universally, mankind by nature seeks the way of self-justification. This reality is stressed in the New Testament. The apostles clearly taught that human merit is doomed as a basis of justification. Paul tried the way of human merit, and he said that Israel went about to seek their own righteousness because they were ignorant of God’s righteousness (Rom 10:3).⁴

b). Justification dependent on fidelity to biblical terms

Justification is essentially forensic. As Thomas Watson says in his quaint way, “It is *verbum forense*,” a word borrowed from the law courts.⁵ Justification concerns a person’s legal standing, not his internal condition. When we have uncertainty about the ownership of our property, we visit our solicitors^a—not the medical clinic.

The meaning and use of the Greek verb *dikaioo*, to justify, and its derivatives are essentially legal in character. John Owen, as no other writer, examines in detail both the Hebrew and Greek words used in this doctrine. He demonstrates that these terms denote a legal status employed to mean acquittal or pronouncing righteous.⁶

For instance, we read in Luke 7:29,

And all the people that heard him [John the Baptist], and the publicans, *justified* God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

This does not mean that the tax collectors did something inside God, but rather this justification was declarative, declaring that God is right. A striking example of sinners being declared righteous on account of another is 2 Corinthians 5:21,

For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that *we might be made the righteousness of God* in him.

The nature of the transaction is complete and perfect. Justification admits of no degrees. I am not partially justified, or half-justified. I *am* justified! I am “in Christ,” and on that basis His righteousness is imputed to me. Similarly, there is the example of a man being accused by Satan on account of his guilt; but God justifies that man because His Son bore the penalty that is his due (Rom 8:33). Justification is the act of God the Father. If He justifies the sinner, who can refute that? A further outstanding example is the illustration of our Lord when He describes the Pharisee and the tax collector who went up to the Temple to pray (Luk 18:10-14). The Pharisee congratulated himself on his superiority, but the tax collector literally prayed, “God be merciful [i.e., propitiated] to me a sinner.” Jesus assures us that the tax collector went home justified.

^a **solicitors** – lawyers.

There are two aspects of justification. The first is acquittal, the remission^a of all sin. The second is the constituting of the sinner as righteous. This meaning is powerfully asserted in Romans 5:19, “By the obedience of one shall many be made [*katastathesontai*, will be constituted] righteous.”

The picture used in Revelation 3:5, “He that overcometh ...shall be clothed in white,” is a most appropriate portrayal of Christ’s righteousness. The remission of sin proceeds from the passive obedience of Christ, His offering up of Himself as the propitiation for our sins. Christ’s active obedience [to all the Law perfectly] provides that righteousness which constitutes the believer righteous. It is human righteousness. The incarnation was essential. As man He lived out righteousness for us throughout His life on earth.

William Bridge states the matter clearly. He poses the question, “Are we justified by the passive righteousness of Christ only?” and continues,

I answer, we are not justified by the passive obedience of Christ only: there are two essential parts in justification, namely remission of sin, and imputation of righteousness. By Christ’s redemption, the guilt is taken away; and by His active obedience, the believing person is made completely righteous in the sight of God.⁷

c). Justification related to the Christian life

Justification must be related to the Christian life. Paul continues his systematic thesis on justification in Romans 5 to outline the blessings of justification. From his description it is clear that the whole Christian life is based on justification. According to Paul in Romans 5:1-11, each of the following aspects of the Christian life springs directly from the foundation of justification.

- The Christian’s relationship with God is peace.
- The Christian is privileged to enjoy a life of prayer with immediate access to God.
- The Christian is assured that his sufferings produce perseverance and character.
- The Christian enjoys the love of the Father, a love of adoption poured into his heart.
- The Christian is assured that he will persevere. His union with Christ, by which he received justification, is the union that guarantees his perseverance.

d). Relationship of justification to sanctification

The relationship of justification to sanctification must be maintained. The fact that the Church in the early and middle centuries was not clear about forensic justification does not alter the fact that the Scripture places justification in a primary position.⁸ Due to Augustine’s^b ignorance of Greek, a crippling error was perpetuated. Augustine interpreted the Latin verb *justificare* as “to *make* righteous.” Justification, as we have seen, means “to *declare* righteous.” Thus, instead of promoting the glorious, liberating doc-

^a **remission** – forgiveness.

^b **Augustine** (AD 354-430) – Bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa, early church leader and theologian known by many as the father of orthodox theology; born in Tagaste, North Africa.

trine of justification, which was so powerfully proclaimed by Martin Luther, the focus was on the inward and the subjective.

As we have seen, justification is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. If a good work of any kind whatsoever is added as necessary for justification, that immediately nullifies the doctrine. As Paul says, "For if righteousness come [i.e., could be gained] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal 2:21).⁹

Justification is destroyed if it is confused with sanctification and made to *be* sanctification; that is the unchanging and unchanged doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. John Owen shows that the whole Roman doctrine is based on the idea of two justifications.¹⁰ The first is baptism defined as that infusion of grace in which original sin is extinguished and all habits of sin are expelled. The second justification is the righteousness of good works whereby the righteous merit eternal life. The second stage of justification is regarded as a process throughout life, which includes the "sacrament of penance" and, after death, the fires of purgatory.

An examination of the new Roman Catholic Catechism of 1994 shows that there is no change whatsoever in the above understanding of justification.¹¹

John Owen shows how the Roman Catholic teaching supplants justification by faith alone. "The gratuitous pardon of sin and imputation of Christ's righteousness once and for all is utterly defeated."¹² The assurance of eternal life is eliminated by dependence on this uncertain process, which in the end requires to be completed in the fires of purgatory. However, the biblical doctrine of justification nurtures assurance so strong that, in Romans chapter 8, all opposition is defied:

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom 8:33-34).

B. A Modern Challenge to Justification

In America, there is a movement known as ECT—*Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. On November 20, 1998, a group of evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders convened a conference in which they presented two documents that, they contended, spelled out a basis of co-operation and unity which would include joint evangelism. Father Francis Martin represented the Roman Catholics and Dr. James I. Packer represented Evangelicals. Dr. Robert Godfrey, president of Westminster Seminary West, represented Evangelicals with "serious concerns" about the statements undergirding ECT.

ECT produced a five-point statement that affirms several notable truths about justification, yet falls short of the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Roman Catholic Church has always contended that Christ's righteousness is *infused* rather

than *imputed*. The decrees of the Council of Trent^a anathematized all who hold to justification by faith alone:

Canon 9. If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema.

These canons have never been renounced, and Dr. Godfrey exposed the fact that the new statement opens the door to infused righteousness and does nothing to renounce the canons of Trent. For those reasons, he expressed his utter opposition to the present stance of ECT. He deplored the fact that Dr. J. I. Packer, while agreeing with the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone, is prepared to compromise when it comes to practice.

This movement of ECT, which originated in America, has a world-wide impact. For example, Noel Espinosa, principal of Grace Ministerial Academy, reports,

Traditional evangelicals and evangelical charismatics have found justification for their inclusivist approach in the document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. No longer are Catholics seen as the objects of gospel mission; they have become fellow-missionaries!¹³

C. How Much Should We Care about Justification?

John Owen declares that justification by faith alone includes a sincere renunciation of all other ways and means.¹⁴ No greater sacrifice could be made but that of God's Son. That is the heart of the matter. The gift of God's Son was a perfect gift and His sacrifice a perfect sacrifice (Heb 10:5-18). When this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. In the Father's wisdom, He has made Him to be our righteousness (justification), holiness (sanctification), and redemption (1Co 1:21).

When we embrace this sacrifice and receive the righteousness of the Son, Who made the sacrifice, we renounce all other ways. Hence Peter insists, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12). He is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:6). The psalmist declares, "I will make mention of [i.e., proclaim] thy righteousness, even of thine only" (Psa 71:16). Accompanying this righteousness is a repudiation of all self-righteousness: "all our righteousnesses [i.e., our "righteous" acts] are as filthy rags" (Isa 64:6).

After the demise of Puritanism, a period of deep spiritual depression followed. But then came the evangelical revival of the 18th century, the hymns of which extol the

^a **Council of Trent** – Roman Catholic Church council (1545-1563) called by Pope Paul III to respond to the need for reform in light of the Protestant Reformation, and to control the spread of Protestantism. It did make some reforms, but installed as Roman doctrine the supremacy of the pope and the whole system of salvation by meritorious works and the seven Roman sacraments.

truths of imputed righteousness. John Wesley^a translated von Zinzendorf's great hymn, the following verses of which epitomize our subject:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
 My beauty are, my glorious dress;
 Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
 With joy shall I lift up my head.
 This spotless robe the same appears
 When ruined nature sinks in years;
 No age can change its spotless hue,
 The robe of Christ is ever new.^b

Many seek the power of God today in miracles, signs, and wonders, but our God constantly reveals His power *in the gospel*, which Paul proclaims to be God's power in the salvation of every one who believes. He goes on to declare that in the preaching of the gospel, the "righteousness of God [*is being*]" revealed," present tense (Rom 1:16-17).¹⁵ In the preaching of the gospel of justification by faith alone, the Church of Christ possesses her greatest asset for changing the whole world.

References

- ¹ Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity* (Banner of Truth, 1970 edition), p 226.
- ² John Owen, *Works*, volume 5 (Banner of Truth, 1965).
- ³ Martin Luther, *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, volume 2, p 702ff; cited in *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, James Montgomery Boice (IVP, 1986).
- ⁴ E. P. Sanders' treatise *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 1977, has made a major impact on New Testament scholarship. Sanders' thesis was that Judaism of the first century was not a religion of works. I am entirely unimpressed by his thesis since it flies in the face of what the New Testament everywhere asserts, and also because Sanders rests his case on very limited data.
- ⁵ Thomas Watson, *ibid*, p 227.
- ⁶ John Owen, *ibid*, p 125ff.
- ⁷ William Bridge, *Works*, volume 5, p 378.
- ⁸ Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (Cambridge), is a major (532 pages) work describing the doctrine of justification and the place of that doctrine in the history of the Church from Augustine to recent ecumenical debates.
- ⁹ Robert Traill (1642-1716) defended the doctrine of justification in six sermons on Galatians 2:21, *Works*, volume 4, p 157ff.
- ¹⁰ John Owen, *ibid*, p 137ff.

^a **John Wesley** (1703-1791) – Anglican minister and theologian; largely credited with founding the English Methodist movement, which began when he took to open-air preaching in a similar manner to George Whitefield.

^b Hymn "Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness" (1739) by **Nicolaus von Zinzendorf** (1700-1760) – German religious and social reformer, bishop of the Moravian Church, founder of the Christian settlement at Herrnhut, Christian mission pioneer, and a major figure of 18th century Protestantism.

¹¹ Philip Eveson, *The Great Exchange*, justification by faith in the light of recent thought, 225 page paperback (Day One Publications, 1996). The author reviews justification briefly in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Geoffrey Chapman editor, 690 page large-size paperback, 1994.

¹² Ibid, p 137ff.

¹³ A report on the Philippines by Noel Espinosa was emailed in April 1999 to Roger Fay of the *Evangelical Times*.

¹⁴ Ibid, John Owen, p 100.

¹⁵ *apokaluptetai*: “is being revealed”; the verb is a frequentative present.

2. The Puritans and a Stable Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

The errors of Arminianism have prevailed in western Christianity over the last hundred years or more. Inevitably these errors have been carried to the mission fields. The theological renewal since the 1960s has seen a recovery of the Reformed faith. However, in this recovery a small minority has fallen into Hyper-Calvinism.¹

A most important legacy from the Puritans is a stable doctrine of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The Puritans were well-versed in the debate over Arminianism that took place at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) in the city of Dordrecht, the Netherlands. William Laud (1573-1645) was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633. He was the arch-promoter of Arminianism. From about 1633, the Puritans were put to the test regarding Arminianism.

In our generation, a decisive book in the Puritan tradition is *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J. I. Packer. This exposition has been widely used to preserve the Reformed movement from Hyper-Calvinism.² Packer uses the term “antinomy” to describe two seemingly contradictory concepts which are in fact not contradictory but fully compatible.^a He uses the analogy of light. As light consists of rays and particles in a way that is inexplicable to human reason, so divine sovereignty and human responsibility exist together in a way that can be held only by faith (Isa 55:8-9). To the human rationality of the Hyper-Calvinist, that is intolerable. The title of a sermon by Richard Greenhill, “What Must and Can Persons Do toward Their Own Conversion?” illustrates the parameters of responsibility.³

A stable view will prevent wrong conclusions and misguided practice. Divine sovereignty in salvation and human responsibility must be held together. Wrong conclusions can easily destabilize the truth of the gospel.

The first set of wrong conclusions concerns the nature of man as a consequence of the Fall. Does man have free will toward God or is he crippled by his enmity to God and His Law? If he is crippled, is he still fully responsible for his attitudes and actions?

The second set of wrong conclusions concerns the sovereignty of God. Does not God’s sovereignty in salvation lead inevitably to a fatalistic mind-set? The reasoning

^a See “Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility,” which is the key chapter on “antinomy” from Packer’s book; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

here is that if God is sovereign, then there is nothing that man can do.^a Also, if God is sovereign and alone decides the issue of salvation, does that mean His love is limited only to the elect, or does He love all mankind?^b Does His sovereign purpose to save only some mean that He is insincere in the free offers of the gospel to all sinners indiscriminately?

A. Wrong Thinking about Free Will

The Puritan doctrine of salvation by grace is enshrined in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and its parallel expression in *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*.^c A number of chapters are devoted to salvation: chapter 9 to free will, chapters 10 to 14 to the redemption God bestows by grace, and chapters 14 to 17 to the graces man exercises. In this compass we see the necessity of divine intervention to save fallen man. We observe at the same time that the fall into sin does not annul human responsibility.

The *Confession* devotes a chapter to free will. This was a central issue in the Reformation. In his response to Erasmus, Martin Luther wrote a book titled *The Bondage of the Will*.^d In this Luther asserted that free will was the hinge on which the whole controversy about the source of salvation turned. That is as true today as it was then. J. I. Packer said of Luther's *Bondage of the Will* that it is the classical elucidation of what the Reformation conflict was all about, and B. B. Warfield^e said of it that it is in a true sense the manifesto of the Reformation. The Arminian idea is that salvation is decided by the free will of man and not by the sovereign grace of God. In other words, salvation is *of* man and not of God, whereas the Scripture makes it clear that it is by grace that we are saved and not of ourselves (Eph 2:8-9).

The *Confession* (chapter 9) has five paragraphs on free will. We are reminded that our first parents possessed free will but there was the possibility of falling. As a consequence of the Fall, man plunged into the bondage and slavery of sin that is now the state of his will—a will ruled by the sinful disposition of his heart. In regeneration and conversion, man is made free in his will, but not entirely so. The *Confession* cites Romans chapter 7 as a reminder of the conflict that continues in the believer. The fifth paragraph declares,

It is not until man enters the state of glory that he is made perfectly and immutably free to will that which is good, and that alone.

Writing in 1957 in the introduction to a new translation of Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston wrote as follows:

^a See "What If I'm Not Elect?" by Walter Marshall (1628-1680), available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b See *The Atonement* by John Murray (1898-1975) and FGB 227, *The Atonement*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c *The London Confession of 1689* is available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^d The key chapter in *Bondage of the Will* is available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^e **B. (Benjamin) B. Warfield** (1851-1921) – American professor of theology at Princeton Seminary from 1887 to 1921, and its principal from 1886 to 1902.

To accept the principles that Martin Luther vindicates in *The Bondage of the Will* would certainly involve a mental and spiritual revolution for many Christians at the present time. It would involve a radically different approach to preaching and the practice of evangelism, and to most other departments of theology and pastoral work as well. God-centered thinking is out of fashion today, and its recovery will involve something of a Copernician revolution^a in our outlook on many matters.⁴

Is this an exaggeration? Not so, because wrong doctrine leads to erroneous practice. From a correct or erroneous conception of man's ability in the matter of salvation proceeds either a correct or erroneous method of gospel preaching, together with right or wrong practices in the churches.

When the reality of sin and its radical effects on the whole man is by-passed, the idea takes over that it simply takes a man's decision for Christ to bring about the new birth. A decision for Christ is all that is needed. This is easy-believism in which repentance from sin is side-lined.^b Salvation is pronounced for those who make a decision. This proves premature,^c and false converts are the outcome. The theory of the carnal Christian has been invented in order to accommodate those who have made a decision but who bear no marks of the new birth.^d *Are You Really Born Again?* by Kent Philpott⁵ is a powerful contemporary book that describes and illustrates with many examples the damage done by misguided methods which stem from an inadequate view of man in sin. The altar call is the device most commonly used to exert psychological pressure in order to induce decisions.⁶ The outcome is seen in the back door to some churches being as large as the front door. In other words, many come in and make decisions, yet are not changed, not born again, and leave by the back door disillusioned.

B. Wrong Thinking about God's Sovereignty

As stated above, the second set of wrong conclusions concerns muddled thinking about the sovereignty of God. The areas that need clarification concern fatalism, the free offers of the gospel, and the extent of His love toward mankind.

^a **Copernican revolution** – major change in frame of reference; paradigm shift. The phrase has its roots in the scientific shift from the Ptolemaic model of the heavens, which described the cosmos as having earth stationary at the center of the universe, to the heliocentric model with the sun at the center of the solar system. Major contributors included Galileo, Nicolaus Copernicus, and Isaac Newton.

^b See “The Dangers of Delaying Repentance” by Thomas Boston (1676-1732), *The Doctrine of Repentance* by Thomas Watson (1620-1689), “Decisional Regeneration” by James Adams, and Free Grace Broadcaster 203, *Repentance*; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c **premature** – before the true state of their hearts is demonstrated by repentance and a love for God and His Word, or a lack thereof.

^d See *Present Day Evangelism* by A. W. Pink and *The True Gospel of Christ versus the False Gospel of Carnal Christianity* by L. R. Shelton, Jr.; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

1). With regard to ***fatalism***, the Puritans countered this mind-set by concentrating on what we call the means of grace.^a On saving faith, the *Confession* teaches that this is wrought by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word. The book of Acts illustrates well that the Church grew and spread through the active efforts of the apostles and believers. Organized evangelism and enterprise in missions is the responsibility of every church, and without such effort there will be no growth.^b A sovereign God achieves His purpose through the work of His people.

2). With regard to the ***free offers of the gospel***, the Puritans were not inhibited in the way they addressed the unconverted. Examples are Richard Baxter's *A Call to the Unconverted* and Joseph Alleine's *An Alarm to the Unconverted*. Baxter's *Call* is a classic and has been transposed into modern English by John Blanchard.⁷ The Puritans regarded all preaching as evangelistic, sometimes more and sometimes less, depending on the subject in hand. The Lord Jesus Christ, said Robert Bolton, is

Offered most freely, and without exception of any person, [on] every Sabbath, every sermon, either in plain and direct terms, or implied at the least.⁸

John Flavel illustrates well the unction of the Puritans in pressing home the gospel to all without exception in his 265 page exposition of Revelation 3:20,⁹

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Sinners are to be invited to come to Christ (Mat 11:27-28). They are to be reasoned with (Isa 1:18-20), persevered with (Rom 10:21), warned (Luk 13:5), and implored to be reconciled to God (2Co 5:20).¹⁰

In the Puritan tradition, George Whitefield wonderfully exemplified in his preaching a stable understanding of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. He used to place lost sinners in a vice. He pressed home the necessity of repentance. But the lost sinner is a slave; he cannot repent. Yet to be saved he must repent. He cannot; yet he must! His only recourse is to look away from himself to the One Who can save. His escape route is cut off; there is no help in himself. His only hope is to call on God for mercy. And a God of mercy will never cast out those who come to Him in faith (Joh 6:37).

3). There is also the question of ***God's love***.^c If God only loves the elect and only hates the non-elect, what constraint is there for the sinner to turn and believe? Richard Baxter in his *Call to the Unconverted* drives home the strong language and reasoning used by the Sovereign Lord as expressed in Ezekiel chapter 18. He has no pleasure in

^a **means of grace** – particular means delineated in the Scriptures that God is pleased to use in order to accomplish salvation and sanctification in the hearts of men: the preaching of the Word, Bible reading and study, prayer, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and godly fellowship with others.

^b See *Soul Winning* by Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) and *Words to Winners of Souls* by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889); both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c See *The Love of Christ* by Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843); *The Gospel of the Holy Spirit's Love* by Horatius Bonar; FGB 238, *God's Love*; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

the wicked that he should die, but rather His pleasure is that the wicked person should turn from his wicked way and live (Eze 18:32). Our Lord made it clear that we are to love our enemies because God loves them (Luk 6:35).¹¹ The love of God for all mankind, even for the most terrible sinners, is well expressed by the Puritan John Howe in his sermon, *The Redeemer's Tears Shed over Lost Souls*.¹²

C. Conclusion

The Puritans were blessed with a stable doctrine of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. This enabled them to persevere in their work; knowing that in spite of the discouragements, a harvest would be reaped. In our time there is so much that seems impervious^a to the gospel. We too need a stable doctrine in which we trust in God's sovereign power to give the increase, but at the same time know that persevering labor is imperative. Like the sower in the parable (Luk 8:1-15), we must sow the seed knowing that there will be a harvest in due course.

References

- ¹ Spurgeon, an heir of the Puritans, fought the battle against both Arminianism and Hyper-Calvinism. Iain Murray brilliantly sums up the issues involved in his book *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism - The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Banner of Truth, 164 page paperback, 1995).
- ² J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, was first published by IVP in 1961. It is currently available as a 128 page paperback.
- ³ *Puritan Sermons 1659-1689*, popularly known as *The Morning Exercises at Cripplegate* (Richard Owen Roberts, Wheaton, Illinois, USA, 1981).
- ⁴ J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston in introduction to the new translation of Martin Luther's *The Bondage of the Will* (James Clark, London, 1957).
- ⁵ Kent Philpott, *Are You Really Born Again?* (EP, 140 page paperback, 1998).
- ⁶ Erroll Hulse, *The Great Invitation* (EP, 184 page paperback, 1986); showing the biblical warrant, or otherwise, for the altar call and history of that practice.
- ⁷ John Blanchard, *Invitation to Live*, a modernization of Richard's Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* for today's reader (EP, 144 page paperback).
- ⁸ Robert Bolton, *Instructions for a Right Comforting of Afflicted Consciences*, 1640 edition, p 185.
- ⁹ John Flavel, *Works*, volume 4. A 400 page pocket size paperback was published by Baker Book House in 1978 with the title *Christ Knocking at the Door of Sinners' Hearts*.
- ¹⁰ Two articles in *The Banner of Truth* magazine pointed the way for the recovery of the Reformed faith in England. In June 1958 (issue 11), the free offer of the gospel was clearly expounded. In February 1959, an exposition was republished by John Bonar with the title *Universal Gospel Invitations Consistent with Total Depravity and Particular Redemption*. In this way Puritanism was placed in the driving seat as far as gospel preaching is concerned.
- ¹¹ Bob Sheehan expounds on this theme in, "Is There a Love of God for All Mankind?" *Reformation Today* 138, and "God's Love for the Non-elect," *Reformation Today* 145. The subject is developed further in *Reformation Today* 135 in an article titled *John 3:16 and Hyper-Calvinism*.
- ¹² John Howe, *Works*, volume 2, p 316ff.

^a **impervious** – incapable of being affected.

3. The Recovery of the Lord's Day

The battle for the Lord's Day was initiated toward the end of Elizabeth's reign and was won decisively during the first half of the 17th century. The Puritans gave England the English Sunday. The advantage of a whole day for worship and fellowship was immense.¹

D. L. Moody^a was not in the Puritan tradition, but I quote him as a pointer to illustrate the practical importance of this issue today. Said Moody, "You show me a nation that has given up the Sabbath, and I will show you a nation that has got the seeds of decay." And to quote an enemy of the gospel, Voltaire declared, "If you want to kill Christianity you must abolish Sunday."² The restoration of a Christianity in decline will go hand in hand with the restoration of the Lord's Day.^b

Patrick Collinson maintains,

The essence of this early Puritan Sabbatarianism^c was the conviction that the fourth commandment is a perpetual Moral Law originating with the Creation and antedating the Mosaic Law. Recognition of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath was reputed to be of divine and apostolic appointment, not ecclesiastical tradition. Sabbatarianism also entailed the conviction that the entire day had to be set aside for the public and private exercise of religion, with no time devoted to labor, idleness, or recreation.³

We may be tempted to think that observance of the Lord's Day in Western society has declined to such an extent that it will never be recovered to its former position. Richard Baxter recalled his childhood experience in an English village:

We could not on the Lord's Day either read a chapter, or pray, or sing a psalm, or catechize or instruct a servant [because of] the noise of the piper and taber, and shouting in the streets, continually in our ears. We were the common scorn of all the rabble in the streets, and we were called Puritans, precisionists, hypocrites because we chose on the Lord's Day to read the Scriptures rather than what they did.⁴

A great change came about during the time of the Puritans. How did that reformation take place? The story of the change can be traced to Richard Greenham, who influenced his son-in-law Nicholas Bownde. Bownde preached on the subject of the Sabbath in 1586. He then marshalled the Sabbath-law arguments in a book that he published in 1595. This was a straightforward and balanced work on the text of the fourth commandment. It became enormously influential, appearing in an expanded

^a **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist who conducted many evangelistic campaigns, founded the Moody Church, the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

^b See *The Holy Sabbath* by A. W. Pink (1886-1952); *The Lord's Day: Its Presuppositions, Proofs, Precedents, and Practice* by Sam Waldron; and FGB 233, *The Lord's Day*; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c **Sabbatarianism** – belief that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath and should be strictly observed throughout the entire day.

edition in 1606. According to historian Daniel Neal, “a mighty reformation was wrought.”⁵

Bownde proclaimed that the fourth commandment to rest on the Sabbath Day was moral and perpetual. To follow studies, do worldly business, or engage in recreations or pleasures (such as shooting, hawking, tennis playing, fencing, and bowling) was discouraged. “Men must not come to church with their bows and arrows!”⁶

Bownde’s brother-in-law, John Dod, nicknamed John Decalogue^a Dod, published his work on the Ten Commandments later. The book was very popular, going to forty editions. Concerning harvesting on Sunday, Dod wrote,

“What about reaping our harvests endangered by ill weather?” ask some. “Trust in providence” is the reply. Better we hazard some part of our estate than the wrath of God fall on us!

Two members of the Westminster Assembly, Daniel Cawdrey and Herbert Palmer, collaborated to produce *Sabbatum Redivivum, The Christian Sabbath Vindicated* (1645). In two volumes this work came to 1,050 pages. The authors begin by establishing the distinction between ceremonial, judicial, and moral law, and early define what they mean by “moral.” Solemn worship they upheld as a moral and perpetual obligation. The Decalogue represents the summary both Godward and manward of perpetual and moral obligation. The fourth commandment, being part of the first table, they assert as moral and perpetual. In 1655, a significant work by Thomas Shepard, the New England Puritan, was published. Shepard expounds the morality, change of day, beginning of, and sanctification of the sabbath.

In 1668 *The Practical Sabbatarian* appeared. This was a 787 page exposition of instructions on the duties of Sabbath observance, written by John Wells of St. Olave Jewry, London. Wells was ejected in 1662. His work is an exposition of Isaiah 58:13-14. He contends that sports and recreation on the Lord’s Day easily remove the sweetness of the Word and are the debasements of spiritual mercies. The law of nature requires a total abstinence from all works of labor and pleasure during the time allotted and consecrated to God’s service (pages 26-28). The very essence of the day, argues Wells, is apartness or holiness from the other days. “Shall men fix days for themselves,” he asks “and shall not God have one?” We must prepare for this day. “Was not Mary Magdalene last at the cross and first at the sepulchre?” (page 241). And then with this choice saying, he stresses the delight of the Lord’s Day: “Joy suits no person so much as the saint, and no day so well as the Sabbath” (page 267). In support he quotes Psalm 118:24, “This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” Between morning and evening service, he advises that we indulge in luscious, sweet, holy discourse (page 320).

A typical outline of advice would run as follows:⁷

^a **Decalogue** – Ten Commandments given by God through Moses (Exo 20).

1). Prepare well for the Lord's Day by prayer and meditation. "If thou wouldst leave thy heart with God on the Saturday night," says Swinnock, "thou shouldst find it with Him on the Lord's Day morning," "Go seasonably to bed so that you may not be sleepy on the Lord's Day."

2). Heads of homes should gather their families in good time on Sunday mornings and prepare them all to receive maximum spiritual edification throughout the day. Public worship is central on the Lord's Day.

3). Heads of families should make sure that the sermon materials are retained. Encourage lively discussion and repetition of the main heads of the exposition at the meal table.

4). Seek to retain the teachings received and blessings of the Lord's Day during the week that has begun.

It is misguided to think that Puritan teaching on the Lord's Day is only negative. It is negative in the sense that we must forsake pleasing ourselves and rather seek the Lord's will for the best use of His day. The power of Puritan teaching lies in its expressions of enjoyment and zeal for the Lord's Day. The advantages of this day well spent are enormous. Thomas Watson calls it "the market-day of the soul." We can see from the following quotations the zeal that Watson felt for the Lord's Day:

The Sabbath is the market-day of the soul, the cream of time. It is the day of Christ's rising from the grave and the Holy Ghost's descending upon the earth. It is perfumed with the sweet odour of prayer, which goes up to heaven as incense. On this day the manna falls, which is angels' food. This is the soul's festival day, on which the graces act their part. The other days of the week are most employed about earth, this day about heaven; then you gather straw, now pearls. Now Christ takes the soul up into the mount and gives it transfiguring sights of glory. Now He leads His spouse into the wine-cellar and displays the banner of His love. Now He gives her His spiced wine and the juice of the pomegranate (Song 2:4; 8:2).

The Lord usually reveals Himself more to the soul on this day. The apostle John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day (Rev 1:10); he was carried up on this day in divine raptures toward heaven. This day a Christian is in the heights; he walks with God and takes, as it were, a turn^a with Him in heaven (1Jo 1:3). On this day holy affections are quickened; the stock of grace is improved; corruptions are weakened; and Satan falls like lightning before the majesty of the Word. Christ wrought most of His miracles upon the Sabbath; so He does still—dead souls are raised and hearts of stone are made flesh.

How highly should we esteem and reverence this day! It is more precious than rubies (Pro 3:15). God has anointed it with the oil of gladness above its fellows (Psa 45:7). On the Sabbath we are doing angels' work. Our tongues are tuned to God's praises. The Sabbath on earth is a shadow and type of the glorious rest and eternal Sabbath we hope for in heaven, when God shall be the temple, and the Lamb shall be the light of it (Rev 21:22-23).⁸

^a **takes a turn** – spends personal time.

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- ¹ The best contemporary treatment in short compass today is Joseph A. Pipa's *The Lord's Day* (Christian Focus, 252 page paperback, 1997). See also J. I. Packer, *Among God's Giants* (Kingsway), p 309ff; and Erroll Hulse, "Sanctifying the Lord's Day: Reformed and Puritan Attitudes," Westminster Conference Papers 1981.
- ² These quotations are from John Blanchard's *Gathered Gold* (EP, 1984).
- ³ Patrick Collinson, "The Beginnings of English Sabbatarianism," 1964, which was an article that appeared in an American periodical *Studies in Church History*, volume 1, pp 207-221.
- ⁴ Daniel Neal, *History of the Puritans*, volume 1, p 560.
- ⁵ *Ibid*, p 367.
- ⁶ Nicholas Bownde, early edition in British Museum, p 132.
- ⁷ George Swinnock, *Works*, volume 1, p 222.
- ⁸ Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments* (Banner of Truth), p 97.

4. Marriage and the Family

The statistics for the break-down of family life in Britain and America are startling. In America, 31 percent of American children have parents who were never married. Over 50 percent of couples live together before marriage. Sixty percent of marriages fail: 50 percent ending in divorce, 10 percent in separation. Those who have sex before marriage have a 60 percent higher divorce rate than those who do not.¹

Against this dark background, we have much to learn from the Puritans.^a Suggests Dr. Packer,

Under God, they were creators of the English Christian marriage, the English Christian family, and the English Christian home... The Puritan ethic of marriage was to look not for a partner whom you do love passionately at this moment, but rather for one whom you can love steadily as your best friend for life,^b and then to proceed with God's help to do just that.²

The Puritan ethic of nurture was to train up children in the way they should go, to care for their bodies and souls together, and to educate them for sober, godly, socially useful adult living. The Puritan way of home life was based on maintaining order, courtesy,

^a See *Family Duty* by John Bunyan (1628-1688); *Preserving the Honor of Marriage: Biblical Guidance from the Puritans* by James A. La Belle and Joel R. Beeke; FGB 170, *The Godly Home*; and FGB 200, *Marriage*; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

A definitive work on the Puritan views of family life has been compiled into a 750+ page hard-back, *A Theology of the Family*, composed of 16 Free Grace Broadcaster issues from CHAPEL LIBRARY. It includes short articles by 60+ authors from five centuries, most of whom were Puritans, covering every aspect of family life, including fatherhood, motherhood, parenting, family worship, and duties of children. It is published by and available from the National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, www.ncfic.org.

^b See *Pathway to Christian Marriage* by John Thompson, and *Preparing for Marriage: Biblical Guidance from the Puritans* by James A. La Belle and Joel R. Beeke; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

and family worship. Goodwill, patience, consistency, and an encouraging attitude were seen as the essential domestic virtues.

William Gouge³ preached on marriage and the family, and wrote a treatise on this theme of over 600 pages. Thomas Manton⁴ preached 32 consecutive sermons on Ephesians 5:1-27. In Puritan expository style, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones expounded Ephesians 5:1-27 at Westminster Chapel on Sunday mornings during 1959 and 1960. Those materials were later published in a series of volumes.⁵

The aptitude and readiness to preach on the practical aspects of marriage and the family is seen in some of the famous sermons published under the title *The Morning Exercises at Cripplegate*. For example Richard Adams preached on, “What are the duties of parents and children and how are they to be managed according to Scripture?”^a and “How may child-bearing women be most encouraged and supported against, in, and under the hazard of their travail?”^b

We should remember that Puritan teaching on marriage and the family was in stark contrast with centuries of Roman Catholic tradition. It was a major break with the medieval idea that celibacy is the best way to holiness when Martin Luther married ex-nun Katherine von Bora.^c The Puritans carried forward the example begun by the 16th century Reformers; they went on to open up in more detail the biblical passages relating to husbands and wives and the family. In so doing, they taught that marriage was not God’s second best, but His very best.

For instance, Thomas Gataker (1574-1654) extolled marriage thus

There is no society more near, more entire, more needful, more kindly, more delightful, more comfortable, more constant, more continual than the society of man and wife, [which is] the main root, source, and original of all other societies.⁶

Thomas Manton declared that marriages are made in heaven before they are made on earth.⁷ And George Swinnock (on “The exercise of godliness in the relationship of husbands and wives”) points out,

Adam was married to Eve before he broke his covenant with his God. He was married to a wife before he was marred by the wicked one. Surely those popish doctors who term it filthiness and pollution, do not consider that it was ordained before man’s fall and corruption.⁸

And on this theme Richard Sibbes declared, “It was the devil that brought in a base esteem of that honourable condition.”⁹

Thomas Manton raises marriage to the highest conceivable level when he opens up the text, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). He cites Luther, “I see nothing in Christ but a prodigality^d and

^a *Duties of Children and Parents* by Richard Adams (1626-1698); available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b See FGB 224, *Babies*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^c See *Life of Martin Luther* by Joel Beeke, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^d **prodigality** – giving or given in abundance; lavish or profuse.

excess of love,” and endorses that by saying, “Love will in time beget love, as fire kindleth fire,” and affirming that with 1 John 4:19, “We love him, because he first loved us.”

The paragraphs in *The Westminster Confession* on marriage stipulate that Christians are to marry only “in the Lord.” In reasons for marriage, “mutual help of husband and wife” are placed first and “the increase of mankind” second.

Family worship^a was regarded as a vital daily duty and took place morning and evening. Children were brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord. The advantages of a thorough knowledge of Scripture from an early age are illustrated by the example of Matthew Henry, son of the Puritan Philip Henry, who from childhood imbibed a living and amazing knowledge of Scripture. This enabled him later to write his wonderful commentary on the whole Bible, which continues to be in demand. In his commentary on Genesis 2:22, Matthew Henry comments on the relationship of the man to the woman,

The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam: not made out of his head to top him, nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him; but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved by him.

Matthew Henry’s commentary on Proverbs 31:10-31 shows that all the duties of the home are pleasing to God. Grace permeates the whole of life and inspires all living. Grace or spirituality is not against nature, or above it or even alongside it, but rather permeates it. The Puritans stressed that marriage was essentially a partnership. Samuel Sewall in his diary records that the family finances were delegated to his wife for the reason that she had “a better faculty than I for managing affairs.”¹⁰

The Puritans taught that every physical and spiritual provision was to be made for children, including instruction

In some honest lawful calling, labour or employment, either in husbandry, or in some other trade profitable for themselves and the commonwealth.¹¹

With regard to discipline, Richard Greenham counselled that it be exercised with “the mildest means and with the least rigour.”¹²

Since about the 1960s, a massive spiritual attack has been made on the Christian view of marriage and the family. The constant stream of anti-Christian propaganda from the mass media can be countered with biblical teaching with special emphasis on practical application. The Puritans set a good example by applying their minds to this subject and expounding it with clear applications. Pastors should preach regularly in a lively and practical way on the relevant passages of Scripture on marriage and the family. Richard Baxter preached and wrote evangelistically on the subject of marriage and the family.¹³ He taught that the Christian family is a role model for society. In the Christian family, we can see the work of Christ in action visibly. This is tremendously

^a See *Family Worship* by J. Merle D'Aubigne (1794-1872); *Family Worship* by A. W. Pink (1886-1952); and FGB 188, *Family Worship*; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

relevant today. In a world in which many leaders who have a high profile set an appalling example, Christians should set a godly example in their family lives.

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- ⁹ Richard Sibbes cited in Leland Ryken’s *Worldly Saints* (Zondervan, 1986), p 42.
- ¹⁰ Ryken, *ibid*, p 78.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, p 80.
- ¹² *Ibid*, p 81.
- ¹³ Richard Baxter, *The Poor Man’s Family Book*, in Baxter’s *Practical Works*, volume 4, pp 165-289.

5. A Biblical Basis for Spiritual Experience

Behind the drug and sex revolution of the 1960s lies the driving desire for experience. The spirit of the world has flooded into the churches, and that spirit is the spirit of Postmodernism, in which what people feel is esteemed as paramount. If it feels right, it must be right! Since the 1970s, the influence of the Charismatic Movement^a has escalated: during the 1990s the experience called the “Toronto Blessing” was widely acclaimed—although many, including numbers in Pentecostal churches, rejected Toronto Blessing experiences as fanatical and unbiblical. Doctors have diagnosed these excesses and described them as epidemic hysteria.¹

The subject of spiritual experience is foremost in world-wide evangelicalism today. A clear line of division can be drawn between a) those who insist that the Bible must be the basis by which all spiritual experience is tested, and b) those who regard experience as pre-eminent and resist the tests of Scripture. Is the Word our authority or is spiritual experience our authority? The Puritans were strong in the area of knowing God by heart experience, but they sought to test everything by Scripture. We do well to follow their example.

What do we understand by experience? Experience is what I feel in my soul. Experience has to do with my emotional life. Christianity is a religion of the intellect, heart, and practice. Experience is not omitted. Christianity is a “felt” religion. Paul says,

The love of God is shed abroad in [i.e., poured into] our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (Rom 5:5).

^a See *The Spirit of Truth* by John R. Broome (1931-2013), available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

We understand Pentecost to be a time of intense spiritual experience. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Their hearts and minds were greatly empowered.

There is a tendency to think of experience exclusively in sensational terms. The day of Pentecost is one example. Isaiah's experience of being overwhelmed by the glory and majesty of God in the Temple is another (Isa 6:1-6). Spectacular experiences are few and far between. For instance, John Flavel describes how, on a journey by horseback, his

Thoughts began to swell, and rise higher and higher, like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, till at last they became an overflowing flood.

He came to a spring where he sat down and washed, and earnestly desired that he might die. But having drunk of the spring, he felt revived and continued his journey. He came to an inn where he spent the night, but did not sleep at all, though he never had a sweeter night's rest in all his life! Still, the joy of the Lord overwhelmed him, and he seemed to be an inhabitant of another world! Many years after, he called that day one of the days of heaven on earth, and professed he understood more of the light of heaven by it, than by all the books he ever read or discourses he had entertained about it.²

In their thinking, the Puritans did not confine experience to extraordinary occasions like this one described by Flavel, nor did they think in terms of a second mandatory experience called "the baptism of the Spirit." Rather, they viewed spiritual experience along the lines of the Psalms, which describe the whole range of experiences: the highs and lows, the exquisite joys as well as the desperate depressions of the soul. Later, in the Puritan tradition, Jonathan Edwards^a (1703-1758) wrote his classic work *The Religious Affections*, probably the most penetrating analysis of Christian inward experience ever written.³ Edwards commences his work with an exposition of 1 Peter 1:8,

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

"True religion," suggests Edwards, "in great part consists in holy affections," by which he means the experience of the heart; in other words, a felt religion.⁴

The Puritan writers addressed every kind of spiritual experience: joy, love, depression, desertion, tribulation, conflict, contentment, and chastening.⁵ Foundational to all experience is the believer's experience of union and communion with God. Beginning with an exposition of 1 John 1:3, John Owen explains that communion is with each person of the Godhead individually.⁶ In communion with the Father, Owen suggests that "the chief way by which the saints have communion with the Father is love—free, undeserved, eternal love." The glories and excellences of Christ are unfolded, and the

^a See Edwards' *Charity and Its Fruits* (selections), *Heaven – A World of Love* (chapter in *Charity and Its Fruits*), *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, *Farewell Sermon*, *Fleeing Out of Sodom*, *The Trinity*, and "Resolutions" (tract); all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

believer is encouraged to deepen his experience of union and communion with Christ. Owen explains the ways in which we have communion with the Holy Spirit. He is very practical and delineates how we enjoy such fellowship.

Delighting in God, an exposition of Psalm 37:4 (“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart”) by John Howe,⁷ is an outstanding example of Puritan exposition of Christian experience. “God’s pleasure is that He Himself would be the great object of His people’s delight.”

Stress on meaningful, rich fellowship with the three persons is never far away in Puritan exposition. For instance, Thomas Brooks^a takes Lamentations 3:24, “The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.” The Lord as the believer’s portion is what Brooks calls “an ark for all God’s Noahs.”⁸ He divides the text as follows:

First, an assertion: *The LORD is my portion*

Second, a proof of it in those words: *Saith my soul*

Third, the inference from these premises: *Therefore will I hope in him.*

Brooks reminds us that the experimental relevance of this lies in the context. The Israelites had lost everything:

Grievous calamities and miseries had befallen the Jews...The prophet bewails the ruin of their state, the devastation of their land, the destruction of their glorious city and Temple.

The reasoning is that when a believer has lost everything and stands amidst the ruins of this world, he has the Lord as his portion. If he has the Lord, he has everything.

What kind of portion is Jehovah? In experimental style, Brooks expounds our God as a present portion. He is with us now! He is immense. He is all-sufficient. He is glorious, happy, and blessed. He is soul-satisfying. He is incomparable. These are some of the 15 aspects of the Lord’s character opened up by Brooks.

An outstanding example of Bible-based experimental exposition is found in the work of Christ by Isaac Ambrose. Born in 1591, Ambrose settled in Lancashire. He was among the ejected clergy in 1662. As he recovered from a severe illness, he experienced a lively sense of what Jesus had done for his soul. He was gripped by a desire to reciprocate Christ’s love and expressed this by way of expositions of the life of Christ. A classic work of 700 pages with the title *Looking unto Jesus* was the outcome.

What is it to “look unto Jesus”? First we must look to Him in each phase of His life and ministry, from His pre-existence to His conception, His birth, then through each year of His ministry, His rejection and suffering, His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and present ministry of intercession for us. At each point, Ambrose requires that we consider Jesus, desire Him, hope in Him, believe in Him, love Him, joy in Him, call on Him, and conform to Him.

^a See Brooks’ *Cabinet of Jewels: Touchstone of Sincerety; Consolations from Christ’s Imputed Righteousness; The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod; Remedies for Division among God’s People; and A Believer’s Last Day, His Best Day*; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

The subject of experience is closely joined to that of assurance of salvation. Thomas Brooks declares,

Assurance will give you a possession of heaven...An assured soul lives in paradise, and walks in paradise, and works in paradise, and rests in paradise. He hath heaven within him, and heaven about him, and heaven over him.⁹

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- ⁷ John Howe, *Works*, volume 1, p 474-664.
- ⁸ Thomas Brooks, *Works*, volume 2, p 11ff.
- ⁹ Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth* (Banner of Truth paperback), p 139.

6. A Robust Doctrine of Assurance

Heaven on Earth is the title given by Thomas Brooks to his famous treatise¹ on the subject of Christian assurance.^a

To be in a state of grace is to be miserable no more; it is to be happy forever. Now, assurance is a reflex act of a gracious soul whereby he clearly and evidently sees himself in a gracious, blessed, and happy state. It is a sensible feeling and an experimental discerning of a man's being in a state of grace, and of having a right to a crown of glory. This rises from the seeing in himself the special, peculiar, and distinguishing graces of Christ, or from the testimony and report of the Spirit of God, "the Spirit itself bearing witness with [his] spirit," that he is a son "of God," and an heir-apparent of glory (Rom 8:16-17).

^a See *Assurance* by Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892); "A Test of Assurance" by Thomas Watson (120-1686); *The Doctrine of Assurance* by A. W. Pink (1886-1952); *Am I Really a Christian?* by Thomas Boston (1676-1732); and Free Grace Broadcaster 179, *Assurance and Perseverance*; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

It is one thing for me to have grace; it is another thing for me to see my grace...Now this assurance is the beauty...of a Christian's glory in this life. It is usually attended with the strongest joy, with the sweetest comforts, and with the greatest peace. Assurance is not of the essence of a Christian. It is required to the *bene esse* (well-being), to the comfortable and joyful being of a Christian. But it is not required to the *esse*, to the being, of a Christian. A man may be a true believer, and yet would give all the world...to know that he is a believer (pp 14-15).

Thomas Brooks unfolds what he terms “the things that accompany salvation,” namely faith, repentance, obedience, love, prayer, perseverance, and hope. Typical of the Puritans, he unites the direct witness of the Holy Spirit—“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16)—with inferred or deduced assurance. The Holy Spirit, Who gives spiritual life, enables the believer to recognize that spiritual life. Thus, in his first epistle, John speaks of the direct witness of the Holy Spirit:

Hereby [i.e., this is how] we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us (1Jo 3:24).

But John at the same time gives tests for assurance: the three tests known as a) the doctrinal test, b) the moral test, and c) the social test. I know that I have eternal life because a) I believe that Jesus is the Son of God (1Jo 5:1), b) I love God and carry out His commands (1Jo 5:3), and c) “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). There must be no conflict between direct and inferred assurance. The Holy Spirit, Who assures me directly in my heart that I am a child of God, is the same Spirit Who has worked new life in my heart and conduct. The two go together and complement each other.

At least twenty-five members of the Westminster Assembly had written treatises relating to faith and assurance prior to the Assembly. The 16th-century Reformers virtually equated faith with assurance; but as we see from Brooks quote above, the Puritans made a clear delineation between the two. Saving faith and assurance must be distinguished.

The Puritan doctrine of assurance is formally outlined in chapter 18 of *The Westminster Confession*.² The subject is addressed in four paragraphs: 1) The possibility of assurance, 2) The foundation of assurance, 3) The cultivation of assurance, and 4) The renewal of assurance. Of these paragraphs, the second is the most important, as assurance is united on three bases:

First, the subjective base of the promises to those who believe in the objective reality of the Word of God;
 Second, the subjective basis of inward evidence; and
 Third, the subjective testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits (Rom 8:16).

The way in which the Puritans expounded assurance is highly relevant in today's evangelical climate.

An outstanding feature in Puritan theology was the ability to distinguish principles, and hold these in tension or balance. An example, as we have seen, is divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Another is the warrant of faith and the way to faith. In this question of assurance, the Puritans distinguished between direct assurance and inferred, or deduced, assurance—and would not allow any conflict between the two. The same Holy Spirit Who assures directly in the heart (“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,” Rom 8:16), enables believers to live the life of faith and produces fruit in their lives. The stronger the spiritual life in practice, the more likely the direct witness of the Spirit in the heart will be.

The believer can look for his assurance to his life of loving fellow Christians and obeying God's precepts. Some object that exhortations to do so tend to legalism and to self-righteousness. How do we deal with this objection? The answer is that the Holy Spirit enables Christians to do good works so that we never esteem our good works to be the basis of our justification. We rest only on the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. Christ our righteousness is our only justification. Yet it is imperative to our assurance that we evidence our reciprocal love to Christ, which emanates in obeying His commands.

Brooks' counsel to believers as to ways and means of gaining a well-grounded assurance is as follows: Be active in exercising grace; follow the path of obedience; follow diligently the instructions of the Holy Spirit; be diligent in attendance upon ordinances; pay particular attention to the scope of God's promises of mercy; distinguish those matters in which believers are different from all others; seek to grow in grace; seek assurance when the soul is in its best frame; and ascertain whether you have the things that accompany salvation (knowledge, faith, repentance, obedience, love, prayer, perseverance, and hope).

It is possible to lose assurance, and suffer much conflict of soul as a result. Brooks suggests six methods whereby souls that have lost assurance may be kept from fainting, and offers five suggestions whereby they may recover it. One support of the person exercised by lost assurance is to remember that eternal happiness does not depend upon assurance, and another is that though assurance may be lost,

Blessed breathings and sweet influences of the Spirit upon them [are not lost]. Witness their love to Christ, their longing after Christ, their fear of offending Christ, their care to please Christ.

While we agree with Brooks in most of his exposition, we cannot concur with him on the idea that God removes assurance. For instance, Job experienced the most acute sense of desertion (expressed in Job 23:8-10 and 30:9-19); yet always possessed the strongest assurance. He could say,

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth (Job 19:25).

We should always think in terms of God's giving assurance, and not confuse loss of assurance with desertion—to which we now give our attention.

Wherever shallow evangelism with its practice of easy-decisionism has prevailed, the danger exists of a false assurance of salvation.^a Connected to shallow evangelism is the “Lordship” controversy.^b A number of books have appeared recently on this theme.³ In order to include those who have made a profession of faith but show no spiritual progress, the idea has been promoted that as long as a person has made a decision for Christ, then he is saved. Even though that person has not received Christ as Lord and shows no spiritual life, he is still to be esteemed a Christian. But the Scripture declares, “Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). How does a person know that he is saved? If he claims that he has a strong inward feeling, and calls this the Spirit witnessing with his spirit that he is a Christian, yet at the same time lacks a credible Christian life, we may conclude that he is deceiving himself. The message of the first epistle of John provides adequate material to prove that a Christian lifestyle is essential for a well-grounded assurance.

Although written in the mid-seventeenth century, I know of no better, clearer, or more relevant book on assurance than Brooks' *Heaven on Earth*, which is kept in print by the Banner of Truth.

References

¹ Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth, A Treatise on Christian Assurance* (Banner of Truth, 319 page paperback). The first modern reprint of this work, which was first published in 1654, appeared in 1961. The most recent reprint is dated 1996.

² Joel Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (Peter Lang Publishers, 518 page paperback). Joel Beeke's treatise is very thorough, but readable and edifying throughout. A shorter treatment by Beeke of the Westminster Confession chapter 18 on assurance can be found in the Westminster Conference papers for 1997 under the title “Anthony Burgess on Assurance.”

³ The two leading “non-lordship” authors are Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation* (Victor Books, Wheaton USA, 1989), and Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Dallas: Recension Viva, 1989). The best known book defending the view that a Christian must have Christ as both Savior and Lord is John MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan, 1988). Highly recommended is *Lordship Salvation* by Robert Lescelius (Revival Lit-

^a See (tracts) “Be Sure,” “Almost a Christian” by Matthew Meade (1621-1699), “Self or Christ: Which Is It?” by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889); “Another Gospel,” “Spiritual Faith and Outward Profession” by A. W. Pink (1886-1952); “Useless Kinds of Religion,” “Are You Born Again?” by J. C. Ryle (1816-1900); (booklets) *Receiving Christ and Walking in Him* by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752); *The Withered Fig Tree, A Caution to the Presumptuous* by Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892); all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

^b See “Is Christ Your Lord?” and “Lord and Savior” (tracts) by A. W. Pink (1886-1952), available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

erature, PO Box 6088, Asheville, NC 28816, USA; 1992). This 217 page book has the advantage of holding the previous mentioned titles in view, and is a model of lucidity in the Puritan tradition. A fine study by Ernest Reisinger, *Lord and Christ*, was published by Presbyterian & Reformed in 1994, 178 pages, which is commended especially for the section that explains the confusion wrought by Dispensationalism, and for the chapter on assurance.

7. Hope for the Future of the Church

As we approach the third millennium, the foremost issue facing the Church is the completion of the great mandate to take the gospel to all nations. In China, Africa, and Central and South America, there has been rapid growth during the 20th century. Will the gospel continue to spread until the whole world be filled with the truth of Scripture? The Puritans were optimistic.¹

Question 191 of The *Larger Westminster Catechism* sums up the Puritan view.

Question: What do we pray for in the second petition of the Lord's prayer? ["Thy kingdom come" (Mat 6:10).]

Answer: We pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, and the fullness of the Gentiles be brought in.

This answer expresses the program of God for the nations. Foundational to the sovereign program of the Father is the exaltation of Jesus. In his exposition of Psalm 110, Edward Reynolds (1593-1676) observes that "this reign at the right hand of the majesty and glory signifies to us the great exaltation of the Lord Christ."²

The Puritans varied in their view of prophecy, but the majority, as expressed above, believed that the cause of Christ would be victorious in the world.³ Psalm 110:1 describes the throne from which Christ initiates and pursues His conquest, "The LORD says to my Lord; Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Puritan expositors such as Reynolds, Matthew Henry, and Matthew Poole subscribed to the following principles:

1. There will be one final period known as the last days, from the first to the second advent of Christ.
2. Christ will employ His power increasingly during that time to subdue His enemies.
3. Christ's power is exerted to subdue His enemies in order that His kingdom can extend and His Church be built among all nations.
4. This will be accompanied with conflict. Psalm 110:1 is the most cited Old Testament text in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 15:25, Paul declares that Christ must reign at the Father's right hand
Till he hath put all enemies under His feet...The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1Co 15:25-26).

The second principle stated above concerns the enemies of Christ. These include powers of evil and apostasy^a that have worked in the Church to destroy it. The most telling passage concerning the man of sin is commonly termed “the little apocalypse of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.” Thomas Manton expounds these verses in ten sermons.⁴ He demonstrates that the apostasy described by Paul is an apostasy from apostolic Christianity that took place over the centuries. It is seen in the development of the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy, which usurped the gospel. This was the teaching of mainline Puritanism and is enshrined in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*.

John Calvin interprets the passage as apocalyptic in style and not literal. Concerning the man of sin, he says,

Paul is not speaking of one individual, but of a kingdom that was to be seized by Satan for the purpose of setting up a seat of abomination in the midst of God’s temple. This we see accomplished in popery.

Concerning the antichrist, Calvin asserts,

Quite certainly Paul meant that antichrist would seize the things which belong to God alone, his purpose being to exalt himself above every divine power, so that all religion and all worship of God should lie beneath his feet.

This interpretation is followed by John Owen.⁵ No apostasy from apostolic Christianity can be compared to the Papacy. For over a thousand years, the gospel became more and more subverted and covered over with error. The Church became the monolithic, sacral persecutor of the faithful, driving them to death or into the wilderness, as described in Revelation chapter 12.

If texts that describe antichrist are taken out of context, then the future is one of fearful doom and gloom. However, if these texts are taken as warnings within the framework of God’s overall purpose, and within the context of the advance of the gospel worldwide, we may be more optimistic. Two principles are working side by side. The first is that evil-doers will get worse and worse. We see this in drug traffic and the Mafia and in vastly corrupt civil governments, as well as in the landslide of personal morality. The second is that in spite of huge opposition, our Lord will have the victory over His enemies, and will not return until they have become His footstool (1Co 15:25). The third principle above is that the gospel will triumph throughout the world.

The glory of Christ in the victories He is given for His holy gospel must be commensurate with the horrendous nature of His sufferings. His reward is described in Psalm 22:27-31 and Isaiah 49:1-7. The salvation He brings will not be in a corner. His salvation will go to the ends of the earth. Kings will acknowledge the glory of Christ. This will be through the prayers and efforts of His people. Psalm 2 urges prayer that the nations be given to Christ, and the uttermost parts of the earth become His possession (:8). His kingdom “will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it

^a See Free Grace Broadcaster 205, *Apostasy*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

will itself endure for ever” (Dan 2:44). “The stone that struck the feet of the image itself grows and fills the whole earth” (Dan 2:35).

Many other passages run parallel to this, such as Isaiah chapters 2 and 11, 60 and 61. John Howe—in an exposition titled *The Prosperous State of the Christian Interest before the End of Time, by a Plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit*—opens up Isaiah 2:2. He makes it clear he understands that “in the latter part of the latter time” there will be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulting in a cessation of wars, “such a time as the world hath not yet known.”⁶ Psalm 72 confirms that the whole earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Psalm 72 and Isaiah 64 provide models as to how we are to pray for this to take place. These are not descriptions of heaven, but rather prayers that involve terrific conflict, the struggle for justice, and the relief of the oppressed.

Elnathan Parr (1597-1632) exercised a powerful ministry at Palgrave in Suffolk. In his commentary on Romans 11, Parr develops the contrast between the Jews and Gentiles.

The casting off of the Jews was our calling, but the calling of the Jews shall not be our casting off, but our greater enriching in grace⁷...[On verse 15] For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?... The calling of the Jews seems a thing impossible, yet it is not so to God, Who can as easily call them to Christ as raise the dead...Here we are put in mind to pray for the Jews.

Life from the dead, Parr suggests, is revival, life, vigor, vivacity. On verse 25,

And so all Israel will be saved...Before the end of the world, the Jews, in regard to their multitude shall be called...The calling of the Jews is a mystery. If you ask how and when, I know not...The fullness of the Gentiles...[is] a full and plentiful propagation of the gospel whereby many of all of the nations shall be converted to God.

Parr suggests, as do modern commentators on Romans 11, that the comparison of Jews and Gentiles is sustained throughout the passage and therefore this argument is irresistible.⁸

The Puritan doctrine of the last things is a doctrine that inspires prayer, motivates effort, inculcates endurance, and strengthens patience. Battles may be lost, but there is absolutely no doubt about who will win this war! It is this view of the promises of Scripture that inspired and motivated the pioneer missionaries such as William Carey, Adoniram Judson, and Henry Martyn. One of the first to implement this outlook in missionary work was the Puritan John Eliot, who in 1631 at the age of 27 sailed for Massachusetts. He became pastor of a new church a mile from Boston. Burdened for the Indian tribes, he set himself to master Algonquin. He began at the age of 40 and eventually translated the entire Bible into Algonquin. Converts were made, churches planted, and Indian pastors trained. By the time of his death, at age 84, there were many Indian churches.

Surely, as has taken place before, powerful forces of motivation and determination will be unleashed once the Church grasps hold of this fact: It is truly our Father's intention and purpose to subdue and overcome all those systems of false religion arrayed against His Son. He urges in the second Psalm,

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession (Psa 2:8).

And through Malachi He declares,

From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts (Mal 1:11).

References

- ¹ The Puritan hope was taken up and expounded by Jonathan Edwards in his book *The History of Redemption*. Edwards earned the title "The Theologian of Revival." Several modern expositions that develop the "Puritan hope" are available today. See Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (Banner of Truth, 328 pages); Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Pres. & Ref., 268 pages); John Jefferson Davis, *The Victory of Christ's Kingdom* (Canon Press, 92 pages); and Erroll Hulse, *Give Him No Rest* (EP, 144 pages).
- ² Edward Reynolds, *An Exposition of Psalm 110*, being the second volume in six (Soli Deo Gloria, 466 pages, 1993), p 25.
- ³ While the Puritans varied in eschatology, most would be denominated post-millennial, not that there is a specific 1,000 years, but rather that Christ would return only after the world has been evangelized. A minority were pre-millennial, the best known being Thomas Goodwin, William Twisse, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Bridge. They taught that Christ will come personally to fulfil the grand promises that are made concerning the extension of His kingdom. Both these views do not spiritualize away the promises as mere poetry, but rather grapple with them.
- ⁴ Thomas Manton, *Works*, volume 3; cf. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 25, paragraph 6; and *The 1689 London Baptist Confession*, chapter 26, paragraph 4. The latter is available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.
- ⁵ John Owen, *Works*, volume 14, pp 241ff and 534ff.
- ⁶ John Howe's "Prosperous State" is not included in his three volume *Works*, but is published as an appendix in Iain Murray's *The Puritan Hope*.
- ⁷ Elnathan Parr, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*. My copy is an edition published in 1651; Romans chapter 11 occupies pages 138 to 183.
- ⁸ Charles Hodge, Robert Haldane, Frederic Louis Godet, Prof. John Murray, Leon Morris, and James Dunn are among commentators that stress the contextual argument developed by Paul in Romans 11. Godet refers to "the two portions of mankind that Paul has been contrasting with each other throughout the whole chapter. Paul teaches only one thing here: that at the close of history of mankind on this earth, there will be an economy of grace in which salvation will be extended to the totality of the nations living here below."

8. The Warrant of Faith and the Way to Faith

A. *The Issue*

Clarity in the distinctions between the *warrant of faith* and the *way to faith* is vital to the Christian, and in this matter the Puritans can help us. We will approach this subject through Spurgeon, who loved the Puritans.

One of the famous sermons by Charles Haddon Spurgeon was called “The Warrant of Faith.”^a This he preached on Lord’s Day morning September 20, 1863, the sermon being number 531 in the series that eventually reached 3,492. Spurgeon was young, only 29 years old. In this sermon, he criticized some of the Puritans. This is what he said:

The warrant of our faith in Christ reasons thus: “You are not saved by what you do, but by what Christ did. But then you have no right to trust in Christ unless there is something good in you that shall entitle you to trust in Him.” Now, this legal reasoning, I oppose. I believe such teaching to contain in it the essence of popish self-righteousness. The warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ is not in himself in any sense or in any manner, but in the fact that he is commanded there and then to believe on Jesus Christ (Act 16:31; Rom 10:9).

Some preachers in Puritan times, whose shoe latches I am not worthy to unloose, erred much in this matter. I refer not only to Alleine and Baxter, who are far better preachers of the Law than of the gospel, but I include men far sounder in the faith than they, such as Rogers of Dedham, Shepherd (the author of *The Sound Believer*), and especially the American, Thomas Hooker, who has written a book upon qualifications for coming to Christ. These excellent men had a fear of preaching the gospel to any except those whom they styled “sensible sinners.” And consequently, [they] kept hundreds of their hearers sitting in darkness when they might have rejoiced in the light. They preached repentance and hatred of sin as the warrant of the sinner’s trusting to Christ. According to them, a sinner might reason thus: “I possess such-and-such a degree of sensibility on account of sin, therefore I have a right to trust in Christ.” Now, I venture to affirm that such reasoning is seasoned with fatal error.

Was the young Spurgeon right in his criticism? Now, we can well understand why Spurgeon was critical. The subject of preparation to conversion is not an easy one, as we will see in due course. However, when we have reviewed the principles involved in this subject, you may agree with me that Spurgeon needed to make an adequate distinction between two vital principles, namely, the warrant of faith and the way of faith.

I will explain this distinction clearly, but at the outset will put it simply like this: When you teach your children, you read the Bible to them and teach them to read it. You pray with them and teach them to pray themselves. You, with countless other par-

^a This Spurgeon sermon and 200+ others are available online worldwide from CHAPEL LIBRARY, and in print in North America.

ents, probably use a catechism,^a and seek that they should benefit from that as it leads to further questions and answers and discussion. You may also sing with them and worship the Lord with them by way of singing. Yet you do not teach them that their doing these things earns them credit, nor that they in themselves have the right to come to God the Father through Jesus Christ for salvation.

No, all these means form the *way to* faith, and that is a very different thing from the *warrant of* faith. The warrant of faith is God's command to all people everywhere to repent and believe only on account of what He, the Almighty One, has provided in the great sacrifice of His Son.

When we read the Puritans or any other body of worthy Bible expositors for that matter, we will find frequent exhortations by them to attend to the ways by which faith comes. Attend to preaching. Mix with Christians. Read your Bible. Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He is near. All that forms the way of faith, but all that does not constitute the warrant of faith. When the Philippian jailer cried out in an agony of conviction, "What must I do to be saved?" the shortest, clearest, and best answer was given, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Act 16:30-31). Paul and Silas did *not* say, Go and read the prophet Isaiah and he will show you the way of salvation. They did *not* say, Wait until next Lord's Day and go to church and you will be saved. There is nothing wrong with counsel about the way of faith and what we need to do as means by which God may give saving faith, but that counsel always needs to be given in the light of the warrant of faith: God will always have all sinners believe at once and trust only in what He has provided for them in the person and work of His Son. Let us look more closely at the distinction between the warrant of faith and the way of faith.

B. The Warrant of Faith

What is the warrant of faith? Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary gives six categories of usage for the noun *warrant*. The Oxford Reference Dictionary gives two, the first of which accurately describes the theological meaning we ascribe to the word *warrant*: a thing that authorizes an action. For instance, for a police officer to arrest a person for an offense, he requires to have a warrant authorizing his action. When we come to faith, what right does the sinner have in order to believe in Christ? The answer to that can be provided in the text: "And this is his [God's] commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (1Jo 3:23). The warrant is God's command that we believe—and nothing we do in ourselves provides the warrant to believe. There

^a **catechism** – written method for teaching the essential doctrines of the Christian faith by question and answer, used and proven effective for many centuries. Several are available from CHAPEL LIBRARY, including *Spurgeon's Catechism*, similar to the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* but tailored to the *London Baptist Confession of 1689* and updated by Charles Spurgeon for his congregation; *A Catechism for Boys and Girls* by Erroll Hulse, which is a simplified version of *Spurgeon's Catechism*; and *Gadsby's Catechism* by William Gadsby (1773-1884).

is no merit of any kind whatsoever in ourselves that gives us the right to believe. The fact that we are altogether sinful points to our need to repent and believe.

C. The Way of Faith

What is the way of faith? There is a faith that is only nominal,^a and there is a faith that joins the sinner to Christ, which is thereby saving faith. There is a faith that is no more than mental assent; an easy faith that we call “easy-believism faith.” Multitudes today are led by the altar call system into easy-believism, and thereby to the fatal peril of false assurance. That is misguided and cruel. We know from the Scriptures that we are always to encourage all sinners to believe; but if we are to be faithful to them, we first must show them who Christ is and how great their need is. We must not indulge in short cuts or over-simplifications. That is why we have to be careful about the way of faith.

The way of faith is really the way to saving faith. That way comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom 10:14). Hence, we have to exhort unbelievers to hear and heed the Scriptures. In this regard we can note passages like Proverbs 1:20-33 and 8:1-36. Wisdom, which we can take as Christ personified, pleads with all sinners everywhere to listen to instruction. Wisdom urges that the hearer heed godly counsel until salvation is assured. Likewise, in the great mandate of the free invitations and offers of the gospel contained in Isaiah 55, there is exhortation to listen, to hear, to seek, to call, to turn. Listening, hearing, seeking, calling, turning—all these are the way to faith, but in and of themselves they never form the warrant of faith.

Jesus dealt with Nicodemus (Joh 3) by showing him the way of faith and that he was powerless to save himself. He told him to look to the serpent raised up on a stick and urged that he look outside himself to the Father’s provision of salvation. Jesus did not try to rush him into something he did not yet understand; rather, He guided him in the way of faith.

Likewise with the rich young ruler (Mat 19:16-22), Jesus showed him the way of faith by pointing him in the direction of learning the futility of his own riches. He told him to go home and sell all, and then come to be a learner. That was pointing him to the way of faith. Some would fail this test of Jesus: leaders who incessantly attempt to get people to make a profession of faith, before such people know what faith is or the demands of the life of faith. Making a decision is one thing; the possession of a faith that unites the sinner to Christ for time and eternity is another. There must be care and prayer about teaching the way of faith.

Hence when the Puritans or other preachers urged the use of what we call the means of grace, they did not intend that those means were to be regarded as a qualification to believe. They never taught that the means were to be esteemed as meritorious. Attending church, listening to preaching, reformation of life, self-examination in the light of the Ten Commandments, meditation on the coming great Judgment Day—

^a **nominal** – existing in name only; not real.

these are all to do with the way of faith. Yet, without intermission there is always that call of God to the immediate^a duty of repentance and faith. This in itself is the warrant of faith.

Christian parents soon discover that it is impossible to create saving faith in their offspring. Only God can do that. A child can walk down the aisle and make a decision many times, but that does not create saving faith. Yet godly parents never cease to urge that children walk in the way of faith, that is, always follow the means of grace by which saving faith is bestowed by God.

D. Preparation on the Way to Saving Faith

Before regenerating sinners, the Holy Spirit imparts knowledge. How can a person believe unless he knows what to believe? In most cases, the Holy Spirit engenders a conviction of sin and of need for salvation from sin's penalty, and in some cases brings about quite a degree of reformation of life in the sinner before the new birth. Some have been known to quit blaspheming, to become truly attentive and serious about spiritual subjects, before actually experiencing that great change we call the new birth. This work is sometimes called "prevenient grace," and sometimes it is known as preparation to conversion.

John Owen describes the preparation wrought by God in a soul prior to the new birth:

There are certain internal spiritual effects wrought in and upon the souls of men whereof the Word preached is the immediate instrumental cause, which ordinarily do precede the work of regeneration, of real conversion to God. And they are reducible unto three heads: 1) Illumination, 2) Conviction, 3) Reformation.

He then expounds these in detail.

If God prepares sinners to conversion, what part do we play to prepare for it? The Puritans are sometimes charged with what is termed "preparationism." By this is meant that, instead of urging immediate repentance and faith in Christ to save, they urge various duties as described above: attending church, listening to preaching, reformation of life, self-examination in the light of the Ten Commandments, meditation on the coming great Judgment Day. But as I have shown, there need not be tension between two facts: namely the way to faith ("faith cometh by hearing," Rom 10:17) and the warrant of faith (there is always the immediate, urgent command to believe and be saved, Act 16:31).

Thomas Hooker was a Puritan who ministered in Chelmsford, Essex, where he exercised a powerful ministry. Cotton Mather declared that

A great reformation was wrought, not only in the town but in the adjacent country, from all parts whereof they came to hear the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ [when Hooker preached].¹

^a **immediate** – direct; without need of anything in between.

In 1633 with 200 others, Hooker sailed to America. There he wrote the book, *The Soul's Preparation for Christ*.² It is possible to criticize Hooker and accuse him of directing men more to their duties than to Christ. That is all very well, but the necessity of persevering under the means of grace applies to all—especially to those who have not closed with Christ or who say they have (but in evidence lack) the fruit of the Spirit, and who may be deceiving themselves. We will avoid confusion as long as we hold firmly at the same time:

- that there is no contradiction whatsoever in directing unsaved persons to attend to every means of grace that will enlighten and convict them, and
- to the urgency and necessity of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for immediate salvation.

The way to faith and the warrant of faith to be saved *now*, are complementary, not contradictory.

It is possible to fall into the trap of thinking that a deep conviction of sin provides the right, or warrant, of faith in such a way as to think that it is no earthly use trusting in Christ for my salvation *until I first* have a previous deep conviction and sorrow for my sin. That is erroneous. But even if it were correct, who could ever tell whether he had enough conviction or sufficient sorrow? If acceptance has to come by something I have to perform, or some quality in myself, then my position is hopeless.

E. The Warrant of Faith and the First London Confession

Paragraph 25 of the *First London Confession of Faith of 1646* expresses clearly that the warrant of faith is God's command and lies in nothing we can do ourselves:

The preaching of the gospel to the conversion of sinners is absolutely free; no way requiring as absolutely necessary any qualifications, preparations, or terrors of the Law, or preceding ministry of the Law; but only and alone the naked soul, a sinner and ungodly, to receive Christ crucified, dead, and buried, and risen again; Who is made a prince and a Saviour for such sinners as through the gospel shall be brought to believe on Him.

Augustus Toplady, the famous hymnwriter of the 18th century, admirably expresses the truth of the sinner's emptiness and the manner in which he needs to apply for mercy. As we come to Christ for mercy, and by Him to our heavenly Father for salvation, we know that our guilt is the only qualification we have:

Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress; Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Saviour, or I die!^a

^a Hymn "Rock of Ages," third stanza, by **Augustus Montague Toplady** (1740-1778) – Anglican cleric and hymn writer, many of which are still sung today. He opposed the Arminianism of John Wesley. Born in Farnham, Surrey, England.

References

¹ Cotton Mather, *The Great Works of Christ in America*, volume 1 (Banner of Truth, 1979), p 335.

² The subject of preparation is opened up by Robert Horn in “Thomas Hooker: The Soul’s Preparation for Christ,” Westminster Conference Papers, 1976; and by Iain Murray in a series of articles in *The Banner of Truth* magazine, issues 195, 196, 197, 199, and 206.

9. The Primacy of Preaching

Many pressures, as I will show, are at work today to downgrade preaching, to give a subservient place to that function in the churches. We can be inspired by the example of the Puritans, who maintained the primacy of preaching. Important principles or axioms undergirded their view of preaching; our purpose here is to examine these. In this way, we shall see why we should maintain preaching as the high point of the worship service, and the primary means of conversion and edifying God’s people.

Underlying the preaching of the Puritans are three basic axioms:¹

- A. The unique place of preaching is to convert, feed, and sustain.
- B. The life of the preacher must radiate the reality of what he preaches.
- C. Prayer and solid Bible study are basic to effective preaching.

A. Unique Place of Preaching

The unique place of preaching is to convert, feed, and sustain. The Puritans worked hard in study in order to be exemplary preachers. They maintained that this was their primary calling, and they labored to maintain the primacy of preaching. No other means of grace addresses the whole person—mind, affections, conscience, and will—like powerful preaching. Nothing else is used by God the Holy Spirit in the unique way that preaching is. The Son of Man Himself came to preach; as did John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Him. The multitude did not go out into the wilderness to hear a classroom lecture from John the Baptist. A rock formed his pulpit and the heavens his sounding board. He preached in such a fashion that multitudes were prepared to walk many miles to hear him. And when these hearers arrived, John did not flatter them or set out to make them feel good. He aimed straight at their consciences; he addressed them as the needy lost sinners that they were.

1) Tremendous forces impede the prime place of preaching today. In America more than in Britain, there is the tendency to displace preaching with *entertainment* in the form of song and musical items, so that preaching is just tagged on at the end. In some charismatic churches, the Bible is hardly featured—let alone expository preaching. Healings and signs and sensational testimonies form the main attraction. This reminds us of Paul’s saying that the Jews demand miraculous signs, to which the apostle responded, “But we preach Christ crucified” (1Co 1:22-23).

2) The primacy of preaching in the preacher’s own life is often usurped by *programs*. His energies are sapped and his time consumed by administrative duties. These deprive him of an effective preaching ministry. In this matter, it is necessary to avoid

the extreme illustrated by the preacher who was described as “invisible for six days of the week and incomprehensible on the seventh!” A balance is to be kept. Pastoring and caring for people is vital, but the imperative exercise of study must not be neglected. The Scriptures liken the expositor to an ox treading out the grain (1Ti 5:18). Don Carson of Trinity College, Deerfield, maintains that he does not know of one effective expository Bible preacher in the USA who has not taken rigorous measures to protect the primacy of prayer and study (Act 6:2). There are mega-congregations in the USA that have been built up through expository preaching.

3) Sometimes Christians have a *distorted view of how the Holy Spirit works*. I heard of a pastor who announced that from now on he was going to get his sermons directly from heaven! He abandoned the work of the study. Immediately his ministry became repetitive and shallow; and after six months of starvation, the church officers asked him to leave. It is misguided to imagine that a) the Holy Spirit directly communicates and inspires preaching, and therefore b) it is unspiritual to write out sermons or to follow carefully prepared outlines. The Holy Spirit honors prayerful, dedicated work:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [i.e., correctly handling] the word of truth (2Ti 2:15).

Effective expository preaching requires enormous discipline of mind and heart. When the preacher decides on a series of expositions, this is a major undertaking that will be arrived at only after fervent prayer and meditation. When a series is begun, the preacher is wise to keep his options open. If he and the congregation do not experience the blessing of the Holy Spirit, another direction can be taken, for the Scripture is an inexhaustible source of truth and edification.

4) A further subtle undermining of the primacy of preaching is by the concept that *discussion groups* serve the interests of Christ’s kingdom better than preaching. Occasional discussion groups can be useful to debate relevant issues—especially congregational issues or practical issues that affect the life of the church or the community. But when it comes to knowing and applying the Bible, discussion groups must rate a third best. Each person brings an “itsy bit”—a good thought here and a wee thought there. That is a poor substitute for preaching. When the preacher brings the Word to bear in its context, and applies it with spiritual power to the congregation, they are lifted up—encouraged by the sense of God’s presence, and motivated and renewed in a way that is unlikely in a discussion group.

B. Radiating Reality

The life of the preacher must radiate the reality of what he preaches. Prominent in the minds of hearers, especially visitors, as they listen to a preacher is the question, “Does this man live out what he preaches?” Moses’ companions had no doubt about whose company Moses had kept when he came down from Mount Sinai (Exo 34:29-30)! Paul exhorted Timothy:

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1Ti 4:16).

Addressing ministers, Richard Baxter wrote,

Content not yourselves with being in a state of grace, but be also careful that your graces are kept in vigorous and lively exercise, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, before you preach them to others.^a

The apostle Paul was able to commend his way of life to Timothy:

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, *manner of life*, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions (2Ti 3:10-11).

The close connection between the holy life of the preacher and the flock to which he preaches is apparent in a further statement from Baxter:

If we let our love decline, we are not likely to raise up theirs. If we feed on unwholesome food, either errors or fruitless controversies, our hearers are like to fare the worse for it. Whereas if we abound in faith, love, and zeal, how would it overflow to the refreshing of our congregations, and how would it appear in the increase of the same graces in them!^b

If hypocrisy is to be avoided, then the preacher needs to epitomize the message that he is preaching in his lifestyle and in his demeanor.

C. Prayer and Bible Study

Prayer and solid Bible study are basic to effective preaching. It was while facing conflict and criticism that the apostles asserted their priorities were prayer and study:

It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word (Act 6:2-4).

What minister is not the object of criticism, some of it warranted? We cannot please everyone, but we must seek to please the Lord in everything. How do we answer criticisms? Our answer is: prayer. We are not above contradiction; indeed, we should encourage our hearers to share their criticisms with us. With some we can use humor about ourselves so they may see that we genuinely seek to strive after humility. But spiritual attitudes can only be maintained through a life of prayer.

As a race of ministers, the Puritans excelled in holding to the prime place of preaching, but they did so in a balanced way. They did not neglect their role as physicians of the soul to counsel and encourage personally the members of the church. We live in very different times with a different set of pressures. Nevertheless, we can derive inspiration from their example. For instance, at a little village in Somerset called Mells was

^a Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 1862 edition, p 100.

^b *Ibid.*

a minister, Richard Fairclough. When he died in 1682, at age 61, John Howe preached the funeral sermon, from which we are informed that people from miles around used to throng to hear Fairclough preach.

O how that congregation hath been wont to^a melt under his most fruitful ministry. His prayers, sermons, and other ministerial performances had that strange pungency, quickness, and authority with them at some times; that softness, gentleness, sweetness, alluringness at others—[so] that one would think it scarcely possible to resist the spirit and power by which he spoke. And the effect did in blessed measure correspond: they became a much enlightened, knowing, judicious, reformed, religious people. His labours were almost incredible. His whole heart was in his work. Every day, for many years together, he used to rise at three in the morning, or sooner, and to be with God (which was his dear delight) when others slept.²

This example illustrates that the Puritans succeeded in their ministries because they excelled in the basics. We can do as well as they did if we maintain a balance in the work of prayer and preaching, together with the care of souls. With regard to the principle of basics, there is the analogy of music or sport. A musician will never excel unless he is proficient and disciplined in basic skills. Expression in rendering pieces can only follow expertise in basic skills. The same is true in sports. A player will never excel at a game like golf unless he masters the basics. In the ministry, a man is called to be spiritual. He must excel in godliness and holiness of life. That is basic. Then he must work in prayer and intercession, and *at the same time* discipline his mind incessantly in study and meditation, as he prepares for the pulpit. He must think about his calling and apply himself to it constantly.

Prayer embraces the people to whom we minister. “God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you” (1Sa 12:23). By prayer, we relate to the lives and needs of the people we address in preaching.

References

¹ J. I. Packer, in his article *Puritan Preaching* (*Reformation Today* 68), outlines four axioms: 1. The primacy of the intellect, 2. The supreme importance (primacy) of preaching, 3. Belief in the life-giving power of biblical truths, 4. The sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. With regard to the first, compared to our feelings-centered age, the Puritans were robust in their demands on the mind, but I do not think for one moment that they were self-consciously saying, “I must direct this to the mind.” In his writings on the Puritans, Packer (cf. *Among God’s Giants*, p 79) shows that hearers were addressed affectionately and intellectually. Geoff Thomas, in the book *Preaching* (*Evangelical Press*), says,

“One of the great perils that faces preachers of the reformed faith is the problem of a hyper-intellectualism; that is, the constant danger of lapsing into a purely cerebral form of proclamation that falls exclusively upon the intellect. Men become obsessed with doctrine and end up brain-oriented preachers. There is consequently a fearful impoverishment in their hearers emotionally, devotionally, and practically. Such pastors are men of books and not men of people;

^a **hath been wont to** – has been prone to; has tended to.

they know doctrines, but they know nothing of the emotional side of religion. They set little store upon experience or upon constant fellowship and interaction with almighty God” (p 369).

² John Howe, *Works*, volume. 3, p 389ff.

10. Imaginative Expository Preaching

A. Guidelines

The practice of systematic expository preaching has become much more widespread in recent years. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones is regarded as the foremost preacher in the British Isles during the 20th century. He followed the systematic expository method and, in so doing, inspired a whole generation of preachers to follow that method—a way that was exemplified by the Puritans. Spurgeon did not use the systematic procedure of preaching through books or sections of Scripture. He explained that he needed freedom as, week by week, he was confronted with the huge challenge of being an evangelist. At every meeting thousands gathered to hear him, many being visitors from other places or countries. The Tabernacle was filled twice on Sunday and then again at a preaching service on Thursday evening. Although he loved the Puritans, in this particular matter Spurgeon felt the necessity of complete freedom to take a different text every time he preached. In preaching a series of sermons, it is necessary to recap, whereas Spurgeon could proceed straight to his subject.

For the great majority of preachers the systematic method is best. The essential ingredients of powerful, effective preaching can be summarized as follows.

1. Expository
2. Progressional or systematic
3. Exegetical
4. Doctrinal (instructional)
5. Structural
6. Applicatory (pastoral)
7. Practical
8. Experimental
9. Trinitarian
10. Evangelistic
11. Powerful (spiritually compelling)
12. Popular (relevant and attractive)

These characteristics can be used like a check list. When a preacher is coming near to completing the preparation of his sermon, he may well ask the following questions.

1. Is this sermon really expository?
2. Is my text in harmony with the context?

3. Is it exegetical?^a Have I fathomed the precise meaning of the text or am I making it say what I would like it to say?
4. Is there doctrinal instruction? Will my hearers be built up in the great central truths of the faith?
5. Have I assembled my material with the best structure?—easy to follow, logically connected, easy to remember.
6. As I preach this sermon, am I dealing with my people pastorally? Am I mindful of and sympathetic with their struggles and temptations?
7. And is this exposition practical? What are they expected to do about it?
8. Is my sermon experimental? Will hearts be warmed?
9. Will Christians be delighted in their union with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
10. And what about those in the congregation who do not believe? How will this affect them?
11. Will it be powerful? How can I bring my hearers to repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Will I be used to “compel them to come in” (Luk 14:23)?
12. What is there about my sermon that makes it appealing and attractive? Our Lord used references to nature, and Thomas Watson used delightful pithy metaphors and similes.^b How can I emulate my Master (and some of His best servants) to make my preaching a) the effective vehicle of salvation and b) edifying to believers?

It is difficult if not impossible to do justice to all these requirements all the time. It is a mistake to over-pack a sermon. The average person is limited in the amount of material he can absorb in one sitting. The best kind of preaching, rarely achieved, is the kind in which one principal point is driven home so that the hearers never forget the impact.

The task is exceedingly difficult. Paul says, “And who is sufficient for these things?” (2Co 2:16). Although John Bunyan was the most under-privileged of the Puritans in the formal sense of university education, he came closest to exemplifying all the features outlined above. Bunyan can be an encouragement to many who feel inferior because they have lacked the advantages of seminary training.

B. Examples

The Puritans are especially helpful when it comes to structure in expository preaching. They developed a knack of opening up the text and the application called for by that text. Some examples will illustrate this.

^a **exegetical** – pertaining to the analysis and interpretation of Scripture.

^b **metaphor** – figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance.

simile – figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared.

For instance, take John Flavel on “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). Says Flavel: Three things are especially remarkable,

1. The soul’s distress: *labour [weary] and heavy laden*
2. The invitation to come to Christ with that burden: *Come to me*
3. The encouragement from Christ: *I will give you rest.*

A further example is Stephen Charnock on Matthew 12:20, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.”

1. First, the subject: *A bruised reed and a smoking flax*
2. Second, the act: *He will not break and He will not quench*
3. Third, the continuance of it: *Till He sends forth judgment unto victory.*

Richard Sibbes, opening up this same text, makes his application like this:

1. Doctrinal: *Grace is little at firsthand; Christ will not quench small and weak beginnings*
2. Practical: *Tenderness is required in ministers toward young beginners;*
3. Experimental: *Christ is a physician expert in treating all diseases, especially at the binding of a broken heart.*

Thomas Brooks, in his *Precious Remedies against Satan’s Devices*, commences with 2 Corinthians 2:11: “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Setting the text in context, Brooks then proceeds,

1. To prove that Satan uses devices,
2. To show what these devices are, and
3. To expound the remedies against Satan’s devices.

In this way Brooks laid a foundation for a short series on the subject. For consistent structured and balanced outlines that draw out the meaning and message of the text, Thomas Manton is recommended.

Scripture varies a great deal in character. There is history, doctrine (like Romans and Ephesians), narrative, wisdom literature, the parables of our Lord, and apocalyptic writing (like Daniel chapters 7-12 and Revelation chapters 4-22). The diverse nature of Scripture demands great versatility in expository methods. The expositor must pray for freedom and flexibility in setting out the salient points and in extracting and applying the main truths intended.

It is evident that after preaching, the Puritans selected their materials for further development and publication. In this way we have preserved to us the legacy of Puritan literature, almost all of which originated in their preaching.

Concerning writing, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) declared, “Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.” While it may not be possible to write out every sermon in full, it is important for the expositor to construct the

framework, and then write out the sections in which there may be weakness, obscurity, or lack of clarity. Calvin's commentaries are still sought after and highly valued today because he is noted for getting to principal points with maximum lucidity. He exemplifies Bacon's "exact man." We cannot edify when we are obscure.

In our day, special skill is needed to arouse interest and keep attention. We who are called to preach will do better at it if we follow the Puritan method of arresting^a headings and structures that are true to the text, but handled in an imaginative and versatile way. A most important part of expository preaching is the use of illustrations that fit the subject in hand. If we can draw our illustrative material from the Scriptures, all the better. The Puritans varied in how much illustration they used, but they excelled in drawing their material from the Scriptures. However, illustrations can also be taken from current events in order to drive home the relevance of the gospel message.

Note the effect of the best preacher of all, our Lord Himself. When the chief priests sent Temple guards to arrest Jesus, they were helpless to carry out the command and testified, "Never man spake like this man" (Joh 7:46). It will be a great day when preaching is revived as God's instrument to convict the world of guilt, righteousness, and judgment (Joh 16:8). We can be sure that it will be imaginative preaching which arrests the hearts and minds of the hearers.

*May the Lord prosper His Church as it continues to reform
under the bright lights of the Puritans, who give us a rich
legacy of truth for the ages by the example of their lives
during very difficult times, and in the immense
treasures of their excellent writings.*

^a **arresting** – attention getting; interesting.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

WERE THE PURITANS NARROW MINDED BIGOTS?

To most people today, the Puritans were a narrow-minded bigoted body of people who dressed in black and hated fun. This is a popular caricature. A scholarly volume has been written that examines carefully what the Puritans were really like. Leland Ryken's book *Worldly Saints – The Puritans as They Really Were* (Zondervan, 281 pages, 1986) corrects ill-informed views of the Puritans. It draws from both the English Puritans and the Puritans who settled in America, known as the New England Puritans. I have confined this book to the English Puritans. In 1990 Baker Book House published an excellent book called *Puritan Christianity in America*, with the sub-title, *Religion and Life in Seventeenth Century Massachusetts*, by Allen Carden. By 1996, this book was sold out and I had the greatest difficulty to obtain a copy, eventually borrowing this book from Prof. Tom Nettles. The New England Puritans developed their own character. Nevertheless, bearing that in mind, Ryken's observations help us gain a balanced picture of Puritan character. In very abbreviated form, Ryken's assessments look like this:

- The Puritans were against sex. Ridiculous.
- The Puritans never laughed and were opposed to fun. Only partly true. The Puritans were serious people, but they also said such things as this: "God would have our joys to be far more than our sorrows."
- The Puritans wore drab, unfashionable clothes. Untrue.
The Puritans dressed according to the fashion of their class and time.
- The Puritans were opposed to sports and recreation. Largely false. A booklength study has shown that the Puritans enjoyed such varied activities as hunting, fishing, a form of football [i.e., soccer], bowling, reading, music, swimming, skating, and archery.
- The Puritans were money-grabbing workaholics who would do anything to get rich. Generally untrue. The Puritans were obsessed with the dangers of wealth.
- The Puritans were hostile to the arts. Partly true, but not as true as most moderns think. The misunderstanding stems from the fact that the Puritans removed music and art from the churches. But this was an objection to Catholic worship and ceremony, not to music and art themselves.

- The Puritans were over emotional and denigrated reason. Nonsense. They aimed at a balance of head and heart.
- Puritanism was an old-fashioned movement that appealed only to people over seventy suffering from tired blood. Absolutely wrong. Puritanism was a youthful, vigorous movement. C. S. Lewis calls the early Puritans, “young, fierce, progressive intellectuals, very fashionable and up-to-date.”^a
- The Puritans were repelled by the human body and the physical world. Not true. [But they were clearly opposed to seductive sensuality and worldliness.]
- The Puritans were intolerant toward people who disagreed with them. True by modern standards, but not by the standards of their day. No group in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was prepared to grant full religious and political toleration.
- The Puritans were overly strict. Often true. Samuel Ward’s college diary consists of a cataloguing of his failings, and his self-accusations include such offences as these: going “to bed without prayer,” falling asleep without his last thought “being about God,” “unwillingness to pray.”
- The Puritans repressed normal human feelings in the name of religion. Not so. The Puritans were warmly human in their feelings.
- The Puritans were legalistic moralists who judged people by their external behavior only. Largely untrue of the original Puritans.
- The Puritans indulged in too much self-loathing. Partly true. Cotton Mather wrote this type of thing in his diary:
A Christian ought always to think humbly of himself, and be full of self-abasing^b reflections. By loathing of himself continually, and being very sensible of his own loathsome circumstances, a Christian does what is very pleasing to heaven.
- The Puritans were ignorant people who opposed education. Absolutely untrue. No Christian movement in history has been more zealous for education.

Appendix 2

HOW DO BAPTISTS RELATE TO THE PURITANS?

We have seen that John Bunyan was an exemplar of Puritanism in preaching, in life-style, and in writing. As pointed out, he was not a Puritan in the Church sense be-

^a C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1966), p 121.

^b **self-abasing** – lowering or degrading of oneself in one’s own esteem or opinion.

cause of his separatism.^a For his unwillingness to compromise, he suffered twelve years imprisonment.

Baptists grew out of Puritanism and multiplied especially during the 1640s and 1650s. We have seen this in Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin. A detailed account of the emergence of the Baptists from the Puritan times is provided by Prof. Michael Haykin in his book *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach* (1996, A Reformation Today title available from Evangelical Press). In scintillating fashion, Prof. Haykin describes the lives of “the three Ks.” A brief look at one of these will give an idea of the story.

Hanserd Knollys (1599-1691) studied for the ministry at Catherine Hall, Cambridge, and entered the ministry in Lincolnshire. However, in 1635 his Puritan convictions led him to make a complete break with the Church of England. He left for America in the same year, but returned in 1641. He worked with the Baptists and became one of their outstanding leaders, being one of those who signed the *1646 Baptist Confession of Faith*. Knollys pastored a large Baptist church in London, attended by about one thousand.

An account of the developments preceding the formulation of the *1677 London Baptist Confession of Faith* is provided in the book *Our Baptist Heritage* (1993). When conditions improved in 1688, it was possible to publish the *Confession*—which had been formulated earlier, but persecution made it inexpedient^b to circulate the work widely. The *1677 Confession* became known as *The London Confession of Faith of 1689* only because of its wider publicity at that time. *The Westminster Confession* represents the doctrines of the Puritans. The Baptists based their confession of faith on the Puritan formulations of the *Westminster Confession* and the *Savoy Declaration* (the Congregational version of the *Westminster Confession*). Within the story of the Puritans, it is fascinating to note that the leading non-Presbyterian divines involved in the Savoy version of the *Westminster Confession* were John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, William Bridge, Joseph Caryl, William Greenhill, and John Howe. 120 churches were represented.

The three Puritan confessions of faith are the same in essence and differ only in terms of church government and baptism.

Persecution and the Unfinished Reformation

As we have observed, the story of the Puritans is a story of constant persecution and harassment. In several ways, this was worse after the restoration of the monarchy and the coming of Charles II. Appalling conditions of persecution continued right up to the time of the Revolution in 1688.^c A brilliant book that covers the period from 1660 to

^a **Church...separatism** – As a Baptist, Bunyan remained completely separate from the Church of England, and therefore did not suffer ejection from a parish pulpit as did many Anglican Puritans.

^b **inexpedient** – inappropriate; disadvantageous.

^c **Revolution of 1688** (also, The Glorious Revolution) – deposition and replacement of James II and VII as ruler of England, Scotland, and Ireland by his daughter Mary II and his Dutch nephew

1689 is by Michael Watts.^a This is scholarship at its best, and at the same time provides gripping reading.

The persecution of the Puritans, separatists, and Baptists is simply a further miserable chapter in the history of that unholy alliance of Church and State which began with Constantine in the fourth century.^b The Church-State union virtually changed the face of Christianity for the next thousand years. The 16th century Reformation was only partial. The Continental Baptists, dubbed Anabaptists, wished to go all the way and separate the Church from the State. Zwingli and Luther could see that they could not succeed in the reformation without the support of the secular powers. From a pragmatic point of view they were right.

Christianity cannot be forced. Discipleship is essentially a voluntary matter. The story of the struggle between a) believers seeking freedom and seeking to maintain the biblical position of the church as a gathered body called out of the world, and b) secular or magisterial^c Christianity, is told by Leonerd Verduin in his books *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* and *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*. These books are classics that explain the history and the issues with wonderful lucidity.

From the time of King Henry VIII onwards, we observe the granting of supreme power and authority over the Christian Church to a monarch, irrespective of his character or ability. It is easy to see how ludicrous that is when we read, in 1 Timothy 3, that every elder and deacon in Christ's churches should be of exemplary spiritual character. When the Pope conferred upon Henry VIII the title *The Defender of the Faith*, Henry could not restrain his delight, whereupon his court jester said to him, "My good Harry, let me and thee defend each other, and let the faith alone to defend itself."

We see in the Puritan story a great deal of misery inflicted upon Christians in the interests of vested political power. It is the tradition in the Church of England that the monarch is the head of that Church. At this time Prince Charles is heir to the throne. He will automatically become head of the Church of England. He has stated that he is not interested in being "Defender of *The Faith*," but simply "Defender of faith." He does not understand the nature of evangelical biblical Christianity.

and Mary's husband, William III of Orange, which took place between November 1688 and May 1689.

^a Michael Watts, *The Dissenters – From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 542 pages, 1978).

^b **Constantine the Great** (c. 272-337) – Roman Emperor from 306 to 337 and the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. He issued the *Edict of Milan* in 313, which proclaimed tolerance for Christianity throughout the empire. By following Christianity himself, and by his direct intervention in affairs of the Church (appointing and presiding in Church councils), many began attending churches in order to gain influence, and Christianity became the *de facto* religion of the state.

^c **magisterial** – pertaining to magistrates; administered by governmental powers.

As Professors James McGoldrick^a and Michael Haykin have shown, historical evidence is lacking to prove a connection between the Continental Anabaptists of the 16th century and the English Baptists. Yet both held firmly to the concept of the gathered nature of the Church, and to baptism being for believers only. Both held firmly to the separation of Church and State. Both believed in liberty of conscience.

Haykin traces—in his book *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach*—the emerging of two groups of Baptists in mid-seventeenth century England. The Arminian or General Baptists formed a smaller group, while the Puritan or Calvinistic Baptists formed the major group, which followed the Bunyan Puritan tradition. Baptists around the world today are rediscovering their roots and the richness of the legacies of Puritanism.

Appendix 3

THE REFORMATION IN SCOTLAND

In 1971 Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones gave a paper at the Westminster Conference, London, with the title “John Knox, The Founder of Puritanism.” That is correct as far as Scotland is concerned. The reformation in Scotland has its own distinctive character and it is better for the sake of clarity to think in terms of two separate reformational movements. There are parallels, but the reformations in England and Scotland need to be traced out separately. Scotland became the land of Presbyterianism. That has never been the case in England. Today there are very few viable Presbyterian churches in England. Several hundred churches have as their confession *The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith*. Without these churches, Puritanism at the end of the 20th century would be almost extinct in England.

Scotland, on the other hand, has a wonderful history of theological faithfulness to the Bible, a testimony that has enriched the wider Church. When the churches in England declined during long periods in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, there remained a solid core of Presbyterian orthodoxy in Scotland, a nation that also enjoys an outstanding history of revival. There is a lesson here. Fidelity to a confession is important. Whenever the Particular Baptists have wandered away from their Puritan heritage, represented by *The 1689 Confession*, they have fallen into decline. When they have returned to those moorings, they have revived and prospered.

While John Knox did exercise an influence in the progress of the Reformation in England, it is appropriate that we should view John Knox as a principal leader in the Scottish Reformation. When we look to the antecedents in England, we rightly acclaim William Tyndale as the antecedent of Puritanism. Tyndale gave the common people of

^a James McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism – A Crucial Question in Baptist History*, 1994, Atlanta, ISBN 0-8108-2726-3.

England the Bible. He was the first in a new line to defy the absolute power of the English monarch.

Characteristic of the Scottish Reformation was the manner in which the godly banded themselves together under the Lord. They did this by solemn oath for mutual assistance and support in the defense of the gospel and the advance of reformation. The earliest known bond or “covenant” was made under the leadership of John Knox in 1556.

A National Covenant of about 1,000 words was written in 1580; it renounced Roman Catholicism root and branch. Alexander Henderson, a Reformed leader in Scotland in the 1630s, drew up *The Solemn League and Covenant* in 1638. This covenant was approved at the General Assembly of Scotland in 1643, and again at a joint session of the English House of Commons and the Westminster Assembly. The subscribers swore to preserve the Reformed doctrine in Scotland, to aid reformation in England and Ireland, and to endeavor to remove all contrary systems including Romanism, Episcopacy, and heresy.

The *Act of Uniformity*, which drove out over 2,000 ministers from their churches in 1662 in England, also affected Scotland. Nearly 400, about a third of the ministers, were forced out of their churches. Draconian measures were taken against those who gathered in unauthorized meetings (conventicles). Fines, imprisonment, banishment, and even slavery were suffered by those who continued to practice their faith according to their consciences. This period, known as the time of the Dissenters in England, was the time of the Covenanters in Scotland. The period 1685-1688 was especially cruel and became known as “the killing time.” Many were put to death by soldiers, without any recourse to law or civil trial. Doctrinally, the Covenanters held to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Many covenanting ministers were shot, hanged, or sent into banishment until there were hardly any leaders left. The story is told by Alexander Smeilie in *Men of the Covenant*, Banner of Truth, 525 pages.

