

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ref-rev-01.php

Reformation
& Revival



A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership

Volume 5, Number 2 • Spring 1996

We sometimes sing a hymn which includes the words, “Tell me the story simply as to a little child.”

It would have helped if someone in my Christian experience had told me the story of the Puritans simply, as to a little child. I am a South African in background and upbringing. I learned history at school. Some of it was English history, but I would not have been able to give an outline of British kings and queens. Soon after coming to England in 1954, I was introduced to the Puritans and began to attend the annual two-day Puritan Conference at Westminster Chapel, near Buckingham Palace. Fascination with the Puritans, their lives and their theology, greatly increased my appreciation of the history of those times. I listened to the original papers on the Puritans by Dr. Jim Packer, which he has now brought together under the title, *The Quest for Godliness—The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*.

It is possible that some American readers will not be familiar with English history. The story of the Puritans is so closely connected with the political pressures bearing down upon them that it is important to know the outline. For that reason I have included a chart of the monarchs: the dates form pegs upon which we can hang the various parts of the story. If the reader is serious about the Puritans and has not already learned the dates by heart that exercise is recommended.

By way of preliminaries we will begin with an historical perspective of the sixteenth-century Reformation and then briefly trace out the meaning of the word Puritan.

The story of the Puritans is told in three parts:

Part 1. The antecedents. The soil out of which Puritanism grew. Here we focus in particular upon the martyrs William Tyndale and John Bradford as well as on the martyrologist John Fox.

Part 2. The spiritual brotherhood. The theme here is the rediscovery of the Christian basics. This is the story of the

Puritans under Queen Elizabeth. We will look at some leaders and through them focus on the emerging character of Puritanism.

Part 3. The flowering of Puritanism. During the first part of the seventeenth century the Puritans multiplied. From this time in particular we receive the unexcelled legacy of Puritan literature. Space will fail to do justice to all the leaders so we will look at three only: John Owen, Richard Baxter and John Bunyan.

When we have lived, albeit sketchily, through those times, and have been introduced to some of the leaders we will consider why we need the Puritans today.

The Puritans in Historical Perspective

The Period Covered

Henry VIII	1502-47
Edward VI	1547-53
Mary	1553-58
Elizabeth	1558-1603
James I	1603-25
Charles I	1625-49
Commonwealth	1649-60
Charles II	1660-85

SETTING THE STAGE

Before we set off on the story of the English Puritans (the saga of New England and the settlement there of English Puritans form a separate story), it is needful to set the stage and view the sixteenth-century Reformation as a whole. Most enthralling is the story of Martin Luther, so explicitly an answer to the prayers of the faithful. Groups such as the *Devotio Moderna* represent Bible-centered believers who gathered in house groups for prayer and interceded with fervency for the reform and purification of the church. When Luther burst on the scene, the deliverance wrought

by the Lord through him was marvelous. Luther pulled the rope which rang the bell which awoke the world from a thousand years of sleep.

We never fail to be refreshed by chronicles describing those climactic events from 1517 to 1521. At first it seemed that Lutheranism would sweep all before it. But the counter reformation came. There was the weakness of disunity seen especially at Marburg when Luther and Zwingli could not agree. The Swiss Reformation began, in doctrinal terms at least, to predominate. Calvin's greatest work was to train pastor evangelists and send them into France. The resultant church in France grew over the next hundred years to over two million members.

Those fleeing persecution found refuge in Geneva, including a hundred leaders from England who fled there during the reign of "Bloody Mary." Geneva, as we will see, was one of the formulative influences in the development of Puritanism. Out of Geneva came John Knox. His subsequent ministry in Scotland was so powerful that it seemed as though that land was born in a day. Calvin's Geneva was pervasively influential in the Netherlands and other parts of Europe.

Beginning in 1600 we can view the Reformation in three parts: Lutheran, Genevan (Swiss) and Anglican. We might conclude that the Anglican part looked feeble and failing compared with the conquests and progress of the Lutheran and Genevan. Yet the Anglican Reformation was to develop further and reach an apex in the Westminster Assembly of divines from which we derive our Confessions of Faith: the *Westminster, Savoy* and *1677-89 Confessions of Faith*. Persecution was the anvil upon which the Puritan character was developed. It was under adverse conditions, which served to refine and purify character, that three generations of Puritan pastors developed from whose hands we have inherited a corpus of expository and pastoral literature

absolutely unsurpassed by any other group of Christian leaders in the history of the church. An example of this is John Owen who represents the best repository of theology available in the English language. The Puritan writings form a spiritual library to help and guide us through our present time of infantile superficiality.

The Meaning of the Term Puritan

The word "Puritan" grew in meaning through the Puritan period of 1558 to 1662 and subsequently. Today it has a fairly clear meaning in Christian circles. The development took place as follows.

The first use of the word "Puritan" is traced back to the year 1564 when a separatist group were described derisively as Puritans, "the unspotted lambs of the Lord." In 1567 the term was employed to focus on those who refused to wear vestments which they regarded as the clothing of the papacy. Thomas Cartwright of Cambridge was extremely influential in his campaign for the presbyterianizing of the Church of England. In 1570 that stress on reformation was described as Puritan. Toward the end of the Elizabethan era it was seen that progress in church government was unlikely. The controversy about vestments passed and something far more significant took over. As I will show, 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. As the Scriptures warn, the godly can expect to bear reproach for their holy way of life. The godly, then, were derided as killjoys and dubbed Puritans.

A new connotation was soon to develop, and this came

about through the Arminian-Calvinist controversy. Those ministers in England who ascribed to the doctrines of grace were called Puritans. When submitting a list of names for preferment (promotion), the dogmatic Arminian, Archbishop Laud, placed a "P" beside the Puritans, thus warning against their convictions, and an "O" beside others for orthodox, as Laud interpreted that term, conveying the meaning that they were safe, that is, "okay"!

The Great Ejection of 1662, when about 2000 ministers were ejected from the Church of England, marks a very important stage in the development of the name Puritan. That number 2000 represents a testimony in itself indicating how greatly the Puritan movement had grown. Among those ejected are the most illustrious names in the Puritan galaxy: Manton, Owen, Goodwin, Burgess, Baxter, Calamy, Poole, Caryl, Charnock, Gouge, John Howe, Vincent, Flavel and Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, the famous commentator on the whole Bible. Following the Great Ejection came the time of nonconformity. The name that prevailed for those who were not Anglican was "dissenter." Puritanism as an epoch was over and the epoch of dissent had begun. New epochs have followed and successive leaders have been active to recommend the riches of the Puritan legacy. Spurgeon was outstanding in this respect as, more recently, was Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. When we refer to the Puritans today we naturally think of them with regard to their writings. It is rare for anyone to be called a Puritan today. Such is the religious ignorance in our post-modern age that to refer to people by the word Puritan could be wrongly interpreted according to prejudiced history records or caricatures picked up from the mass media.

PART 1

ANTECEDENTS

Church history is organic. Every generation has its antecedents. We are all influenced by our predecessors and peers. We have our role models and this is especially true of the Puritans who looked back to their immediate predecessors who had given their lives for the Gospel. Puritanism had its creative causes and it is important to examine the soil out of which Puritanism grew. I see four major formative influences in the making of the English Puritanism: (1) William Tyndale and the supremacy of the Bible. (2) John Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, and the testimony of John Bradford. (3) John Hooper, bishop, reformer, and martyr. (4) John Calvin and the reformation of the church.

William Tyndale and the Supremacy of the Bible

Occupying prime position in the making of Puritanism is the Bible. Through the Puritans, England became the land of the Book. This movement toward and into the Scriptures had its genesis in William Tyndale. Born in Gloucestershire, Tyndale was educated at Oxford where he gained his M.A. in 1515. Thereafter Tyndale came into conflict with a miserably ignorant Roman priest in the home of his patron, Sir John Walsh, at Little Sodbury in Gloucestershire. This drew from Tyndale the vow, "If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause that a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

Tyndale was both a brilliant linguist and a talented theologian. He obtained support from a wealthy London cloth merchant, Humphrey Monmouth, and travelled to the Continent. There he succeeded in translating and printing the New Testament which was smuggled back into England.

The best biography of Tyndale was published in 1994 by Yale University Press. The author, David Daniell, has estab-

lished the Tyndale Society (for details write to The Tyndale Society, 10B Littlegate Street, Oxford, OX1 1QT, United Kingdom). He writes as follows,

At the end of the 20th century Tyndale's achievement begins to look substantially greater than has ever been understood. He was a most remarkable scholar and linguist whose eight languages included skill in Greek and Hebrew far above the ordinary Englishman of the time—indeed Hebrew was virtually unknown in England. His unsurpassed ability was to work as a translator with the sounds and rhythms as well as the senses of English, to create unforgettable words, phrases, paragraphs, and chapters, and to do so in a way that, again unusual for the time, is still even today direct and living. Newspaper headlines still quote Tyndale, though unknowingly, and he has reached more people even than Shakespeare. At the centre of it all for him was his root in the deepest heart of New Testament theology, a faith of the sort that can, and did, move mountains.

What Luther did for the German people, William Tyndale did for the English. His translation of the Bible radically affected the translations which followed, especially the Geneva Bible which was the favorite and later the King James (Authorized Version) which was to hold the field for centuries to come, right up to our times when it is being displaced by contemporary-style translations such as the NIV.

Tyndale was hounded from one place to another, was eventually betrayed, suffered in prison and then martyred by strangling and burning at Vilvoorde near Brussels in 1536. Thus ended the life of one of England's greatest heroes.

His theological writings were published in 1572 and represent the main doctrinal foundations of Protestant Christianity especially on the central issue of Justification

by faith alone, by grace alone.

John Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, and the testimony of John Bradford

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. Wicked, superstitious, devious and unreliable 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 of this was that she accused the leader of defamation and ordered that his ears be cut off! This illustrates the absolute power of these monarchs. It is little wonder that 800 who saw what was ahead fled to the Continent, 100 of these to Geneva. During the reign of “Bloody Mary,” 277 suffered cruel execution.

The ghastly and gruesome scenes of human bodies burning alive in public places were etched into the minds of the people, bringing about a deep detestation of the Romish superstition that caused this. The faith, constancy and courage of those who died was the talk of the nation. The principle for which they died was the rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

John Foxe. Raised up to record the sufferings of these martyrs was the remarkable author John Foxe.

Born in Lincolnshire in 1517, Foxe began studies in Oxford at age 16. His studies were instrumental in his conversion by the time he had earned his M.A. 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 when a stranger came up to him and placed a generous sum of money into 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 the dreaded Mary came to the throne, Foxe left for the Continent where he joined English refugees, first at Frankfurt and then at Basle. He had already begun to collect materials for his work on the martyrs from the year 1000 A.D. To this he was to add the martyrs under Bloody Mary, and the whole work eventually expanded to 1700 folio pages. The best available edition of Foxe’s record of the Martyrs is an eight-volume set in the Evangelical Library, London. When Elizabeth came to the throne, Foxe returned to England and continued with his writings. He was essentially a literary man, meticulous in detail. His reputation as a scholar has never been refuted.

In 1570 Queen Elizabeth was excommunicated by the Pope. The command was given in the same year that Foxe’s record of the martyrs be placed in all the churches of the realm. In addition, his work was a best-seller of those times. In due course there would not be a Puritan home without Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. His role in conveying the testimony of the martyrs was extraordinary in the shaping of England and in the formation of the Puritan mind.

Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* (the formal title of his extensive chronicle on the martyrs) was the principal influence in turning England to Protestantism. Foxe’s writing was used to instil 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 description of the various characters who come to cross the river Jordan. Remember Mr. Despondency? His last words were, “Farewell

night, welcome day!"

A further influence of Foxe was to instil the idea of England as an elect nation, specially privileged and therefore specially called to play a leading role among the nations. When Elizabeth came to the throne the expectation was high that reformation in England would be completed and make her to be the example of godliness to the world. Foxe's influence concerning England as a specially privileged and elect nation was phenomenal. Foxe immortalized the dying sayings of the martyrs such as Bishop Hugh Latimer's words to Bishop Ridley when they died together at the stake: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, 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.

Under Mary, England's noblest sons were burned. Among those who received the martyr's crown were not only bishops Latimer and Ridley, just mentioned, but Cranmer, Hooper and many godly ministers such as John Bradford, whose lives provide the bedrock upon which Puritanism was built.

John Bradford. John Bradford (1510-55) can be singled out particularly as one who shaped the character of Puritanism. He 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, 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, 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.

With John Bradford, when he was burned at the stake in 1555, was a young apprentice, aged nineteen, named John Lease. 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!"

John Hooper: Bishop, Reformer, and Martyr

John Hooper, the only son of wealthy parents, was born in Somerset in 1495. He studied at Merton College, Oxford, and on leaving 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 Reformation. Jan Lasci (1499-1560), son of one of the richest aristocratic families in Poland, was his closest friend. Lasci later 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 too 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 which contradicted his principles.

Hooper was an excellent, powerful and popular preacher. Large crowds came to hear him. Dickens, the historian, points to his almost superhuman energies. He was deeply exercised about the ignorance and corruption of the clergy. He made it his habit to tour his diocese and visit 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; thirty-nine did not know the location of the Lord's Prayer and thirty-four 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 very extensive change that came about through the Puritans.

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.

John Calvin and the Reformation of the Church

The example of John Calvin had a profound effect in

England. There were about one hundred English refugees in Geneva at the time of Mary's reign of terror. They, like John Knox, caught the vision for the complete reformation of the church, i.e., in its form of government and its form of worship. John Knox was a "root and branch" reformer who was influenced by Calvin and the Reformation at Geneva. What Knox achieved in spectacular fashion in Scotland, the returning English exiles would have liked to achieve in England. 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 chagrin they realized that radical reform was not going to be possible.

In due course the vision of a church reformed after the Genevan pattern and made Presbyterian was taken up by Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603), an exceedingly popular teacher at Cambridge. Two of his disciples, John Field and Thomas Wilcocks, wrote in detail on this theme under the title *An Admonition to Parliament*. It did not work.

Cartwright was expelled from Cambridge University in 1570. It became evident that progress in the direction of church reform would fail. The Puritan pastors concentrated their efforts in other directions such as the development of the godly life, evangelism, preaching, and becoming expert physicians of the soul. That brings us to part two.

PART 2

THE SPIRITUAL BROTHERHOOD

It is now our joy to look at and be touched by the lives of pastors who, through their union with Christ, were in love with the godly life. They became famous as men of prayer and as preachers skilled in winning souls and counselling those in distress. The names of these pioneers of godliness became legends in Puritan England. These pastors represented a brotherhood closely bonded in unity and love.

They encouraged each other in the truth and its practice. May we be influenced by their example and thereby be renewed in the basics of the Christian life. They majored in majors. If we do the same there is no reason why we should not prosper spiritually as they did. It is by the basic means of prayer, preaching and pastoring that the truth will eventually permeate the whole earth. This is what the Puritans believed to be God's predestined purpose.

Part of the story is to know the pressures which vexed these men. Elizabeth, who reigned in this period, was an astute politician. At the beginning of her reign she encouraged legislation through Parliament known as "The Elizabethan Settlement" which insured that she exercised absolute control over the church. She insisted that her will be enforced by her bishops. Theodore Beza, who succeeded Calvin in Geneva, said sarcastically but with considerable justification, "The Papacy was never abolished in England, but rather transferred to the sovereign!" This was exceedingly distasteful to the Puritans, but they had no option but to forbear. They did not believe in Independency which in any case simply was not a viable option in those times.

Queen 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 implications. In the event she never married. Unlike her half sister Mary, she avoided severe persecution. Nevertheless there was nothing spiritual about Elizabeth, and many suffered grievously and grossly unjustly under her. She steadfastly resisted all the attempts of the Puritans to reform the church. As it happened, her excommunication by the Pope in 1570 helped the Protestant cause in England. In 1588 the Spanish made a massive effort to invade England. The Spanish Armada consisted of an impressive fleet of 130 ships intended to convey

50,000 soldiers as an attacking force. However, overwhelming defeat was suffered and fewer 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 which was the most hideous and devilish system of persecution.

Richard Greenham (1531-91)

Richard Greenham is the first one we meet in the spiritual brotherhood. In 1570 he left the academic atmosphere of Cambridge where he had been a tutor, to take up pastoral work in the poor and remote parish of Dry Drayton in Cambridgeshire. There he labored for twenty years, preaching away only occasionally. Greenham became a pastor par excellence, a physician able to discern the deep experiences of the soul, an expert in counselling and comforting. He constantly rose, winter and summer, at 4 a.m. and refused several lucrative preferments and abounded in acts of generosity to the poor.

Young men came to Dry Drayton to stay, 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 of a wider work, the rooting of the Gospel in rural England. Richard Greenham was pestered for running services his way, but like most of his Puritan brothers he was passive. He did not wish to argue about things he regarded as "adiophora," that is, things indifferent. 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.

Greenham was celebrated for promoting peace among those who differed because of conscience, and had such a high regard for the ordinance of public worship that he esteemed it a duty and happiness to attend the house of the Lord no matter how weak the preacher.

Henry Smith (1560-91)

We see something of the influence of Greenham in one of his pupils, Henry Smith. Smith 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, being 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 aged only 31 but, like Robert Murray M'Cheyne of a later day, "he lived long in a little time."

Richard Rogers

Richard Rogers was the son of a joiner at Chelmsford in Essex. In 1566 he was sent by a wealthy patron to be a sizar (a student who also served senior students) at Christ's College, Cambridge. He was there when Thomas Cartwright was expelled. After earning his M.A. he returned to Essex to become a preacher of God's Word in the village of Wethersfield, there to labor for the conversion of souls but also to work at mortification of sin in his own soul.

Rogers devised a daily rule of life for himself which, in his preaching, he then presented as a pattern for others. He organized meetings in the area for prayer and for spiritual conference. Like Greenham, he kept a school in his house for young men destined for Cambridge. A passive resister of ecclesiastical authority, again like Greenham, he enjoyed

the protection of influential friends.

Having first committed himself to the rigors of the godly life he wrote a treatise on practical godly living. This was called *The Seven Treatises*, a work which 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 was a fascination with the essence of godliness. Rogers kept a diary and 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*, the 970-page facsimile of which was republished by the Banner of Truth in 1983.

We should not imagine that here was one who was waited on by servants as he gave himself to spiritual exercises. We read of him that

He did regard it as his duty to meditate, study and write but that 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, the head of a boarding school, a husband and a prolific begetter of children!

Rogers was hardworking. Being scrupulous about detail, we are not surprised that he prospered. He was watchful not to let his heart cling to earthly comforts. His diary complains of wandering thoughts and also of anxiety. He was peeved by bad weather in the summer of 1588 when persistent rain prevented him from getting the hay harvest into his barns. Be it noted that the same bad weather was the instrument used to drive the Spanish Armada up the channel and thus protect a nation in which a marvellous spiritual work was unfolding.

This brotherhood in which the pastors prayed for and

encouraged each other never became a formal organization. It was a spiritual movement that grew.

Laurence Chaderton (1547-1640)

Chaderton lived to be almost a hundred years old, yet published little. He came from a wealthy Roman Catholic family by which he was “nuzled up in Popish superstition.” He suffered disinheritance when he embraced the Gospel and Puritanism. He became a Fellow (tutor) at Christ’s College, Cambridge, and was there when Thomas Cartwright was expelled. He was a lecturer for fifty years at St. Clements Church, Cambridge. Chaderton married into the notable Puritan family of the Culverwells, and so became the uncle by marriage of the famous Puritan preacher William Gouge. 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!”

A very well-known benefactor of that time was Sir Walter Mildmay who founded Emmanuel College at Cambridge. Sir Walter chose Chaderton to be master of that College which position he filled for forty years. Emmanuel, like Sidney Sussex, Cambridge, was a Puritan college. From these colleges came the mainstream of ministers of the Word.

Arthur Hildesham (1563-1631)

Hildesham 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. When young Arthur refused he 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.

He obtained an appointment at Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire where he continued for 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 Hildesham was esteemed a foremost leader of the Puritans and was given the place of leadership to present the Millenary Petition signed by over one thousand clergy. This petition pleaded for reformation. 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 two thousand pounds which was entirely beyond his means. He was retrieved with difficulty by his supporters from these setbacks.

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 remembered that he had, after all, been paid.

Dod was much in demand as a popular preacher. He settled for twenty years at Hanwell in Oxfordshire where he exercised spiritual leadership. With four other preachers he set up a lectureship at Banbury. Like Hildesham, 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." And 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."

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 that

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 not 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 spiritual counsel and wisdom. Since he lived to age 95 we are not surprised to discover that he was latterly a counsellor to those who decided to leave for the new world of America.

William Perkins (1558-1602)

In William Perkins we see the epitome of Puritanism. 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 Prophecy*. This title has just been republished by the Banner of Truth Trust. 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.

He 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 that came to hear him preach at St. Andrews. It is said of him that his sermons were, 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 which stirred lost souls to see the reality of eternal condemnation. Perkins was so gifted in eloquence that the very way he uttered the word "Damn!" made sinners tremble.

Perkins was thoroughly learned. Typical of the brotherhood and like his mentor, John Calvin, he was skillful in the doctrines of grace and refuted Arminianism by sticking to the meaning of the text and avoiding distortions for the sake of a system.

Like his brother Puritans, Perkins knew the pain of severe persecution. When charges of nonconformity were brought against him, his exemplary character and transparent godliness made his enemies appear the bigots they were which made it very difficult for them to sound convincing.

Perkins' writings more than any other of his time exer-

cised a pervasive influence on the whole fraternity, and from him particularly they learned to transpose doctrine into practice. He died young and his loss was sorely felt.

The character of experimental and practical holiness typified in the examples I have set before you was to be reproduced over and over again in the next century. We have noted the pleasure these brothers experienced in prayer and the godly life as well as the phenomena of powerful preaching. These preachers were a delight to listen to.

PART 3

THE FULL OAK

Using the analogy of an oak tree, we see the Word of God as the acorn (Tyndale's New Testament), the ashes of the martyrs burned at the stake as the soil, the ministries of the like of John Bradford, John Hooper and martyrologist John Foxe as the roots, the spiritual brotherhood exemplified in the kind of men described above (in sixteenth-century Elizabethan England) as the young oak growing, and the resultant situation in the seventeenth century from 1603 to 1662, the growth of a massive oak tree.

This period from 1603 to 1662 was turbulent. The breakdown of the monarchy was unique. The story of the Puritans reaches its apex and termination in this period. It is vital to know the history.

Elizabeth I died in 1602 and with her the line of the Tudors. James I of Scotland represented the first in the line of the Stuarts. Elizabeth set out to make England great, and she did. Despite her personal tantrums, sulks and irrationalities, it was a period of political stability, especially so in the light of what was to come in the mid-seventeenth century. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Puritans represented about a fifth of the body of Church of England clergy. That is a rough guess. I know of no accurate

statistics.

The Puritans held out high hopes that James, coming from Presbyterian Scotland, would herald church reform. They were sadly disappointed. We have noted that Arthur Hildesham was a leader involved in presenting the Millenary Petition at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604. This Petition urged reformation. James was highly intelligent. He understood well the intricacies of church government. He had come to believe in the "divine right of kings" meaning that to disobey the king is to disobey God. He 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 came out with the dictums, "No bishop, no King!" and, "Presbytery agreeth as much with monarchy as God with the Devil!" And to the Puritan divines 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! The King conceded only to a new translation of the Bible known as "The Authorized Version" (or King James Version) and an extension of the Church of England catechism.

As it turned out, many did leave England for America. Most famous is the sailing of the *Mayflower* in 1620. In the 1630s about 4000 of Puritan conviction left to settle in the New England Colonies and there make their contribution to the forming of a new nation.

Charles I began his reign in 1625. Handsome, dignified, chaste, he had real qualities. However, unlike Elizabeth, he lacked the essential expertise in keeping checks and balances and walking the tightrope of politics. Increasingly he came into conflict with Parliament. Marriage to Henrietta Maria, Roman Catholic sister of Louis XIII, did not help.

Charles became more and more entangled in intrigue which eventually was interpreted as high treason and ultimately ended in his execution by beheading in 1649.

Into this equation of disaster came a principal player in the person of William Laud (1573-1644), who was appointed by Charles to be his archbishop and chief minister of State. A cryptocatholic, Laud was also an ardent Arminian, and the Puritans detested Arminianism. In compelling conformity, Laud was a scourge to the Puritans. When he attempted to enforce the Church of England order on Presbyterian Scotland in 1638, it was like striking a match to dry gunpowder! War followed. This was the beginning of the end for Charles.

By 1640 the breach between Charles and Parliament was irreparable. By 1643 there was civil war. At first there seemed to be a balance of power between the Royalists and the Roundheads (parliamentary forces). This changed gradually with the emergence of the precocious brilliance of a cavalry general, Oliver Cromwell.

Cromwell believed that righteousness was the basis of victory. He surrounded himself with men of prayer. He formed a model army. He led his men from the front. He possessed an astonishing ability to measure the morale of his soldiers and knew just the right moment to strike for victory. For instance at the battle of Dunbar in Scotland, outnumbered more than two to one against the Scots who were tough and determined soldiers, his army struggling with sickness and fatigue, the geographic situation adverse, he devised a strategy of surprise attack. This resulted in an overwhelming 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 biography (Panter, 1975, 750 pages), says of Cromwell as a strate-

gist: "To achieve what it 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" (p. 390).

Oliver Cromwell took control of the nation in her hour of desperate need and ruled as a benevolent dictator until his decease in 1658. He was a firm believer in religious liberty and in that respect, way ahead of his times.

In 1643 Parliament called for an assembly of ministers with the specific purpose of hammering out a form of a national church government to replace episcopacy. This assembly of divines met at Westminster in London. Work continued until 1647. The now famous *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, together a *Directory for Public Worship*, were the positive results of the Assembly.

When Cromwell died in 1658 there was no one of his caliber to take over. In 1660 the nation resorted again to monarchy. Charles II was called to the throne. Anglicans predominated and soon returned to the old vicious way of enforcing conformity. As you will see from the section tracing out the meaning of the word Puritan, the Great Ejection of 1662 brought to an end the Puritan epoch. The age of dissent had begun.

Throughout this period the Puritans multiplied. They developed along the lines set out by the spiritual brotherhood. They pastored and preached, opening the Scriptures in an expository, doctrinal, practical and experimental way. Outstanding pastors who lost their livings in the Great Ejection of 1662 did not lose their pens. They continued to write up their materials. A considerable section of our literature legacy comes from the post-1662 period.

As the story of the Puritans in the seventeenth century is viewed in perspective, it is impressive to note the exceptional number of gifted ministers and the high quality of their writings. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews in

chapter eleven said that he simply did not have the time to tell of all the men and women of faith who had gone before. We can be grateful that with the republication of many of the writings of the seventeenth-century Puritan leaders, the biographies included are more accessible.

At this point I will review this publishing phenomenon, and then describe three giants of that period: John Owen, Richard Baxter and John Bunyan.

A renewal of interest in the Puritans began in the late 1950s and accelerated in 1960s. The Banner of Truth has led the way and has published whole sets of Puritan writings: John Owen (sixteen volumes plus seven volumes on Hebrews), John Flavel (six volumes), Thomas Brooks (six volumes), John Bunyan (three large size volumes), David Clarkson (three volumes), the beginning of the Thomas Manton set of twenty-two volumes, Richard Sibbes (seven volumes) and George Swinnock (three volumes). Added to this are three volumes by Thomas Watson: *A Body of Divinity* (the first book published by the Banner and one of the most consistent sellers), *The Ten Commandments* and *The Lord's Prayer*. The most recent of many other Puritan titles is George Newton on John 17 (394-page hardback). Newton was one of the ejected Puritans.

Added to this there are Banner of Truth popular paperbacks titles, the most useful of which are: *The Providence of God* by John Flavel, *A Lifting Up of the Downcast* by William Bridge, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* by Thomas Brooks, *The Reformed Pastor* by Richard Baxter, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* by Samuel Bounds and *Heaven on Earth* by Thomas Brooks.

Recently a publishing work of sensational enterprise and energy has emerged: Soli Deo Gloria, P. O. Box 451, Morgan, Pennsylvania 15064. Driving this chariot is a young American, Don Kistler, who in a short time has produced, in hardback and attractive format, many Puritan gems.

Included in the list is the complete set of works by Richard Baxter (four jumbo-size volumes in double-column style and each weighing two kilos!), John Howe (three volumes), William Bridge (five volumes), and choice works by Jeremiah Burroughs (seven books including *The Excellency of a Gracious Spirit* and *The Evil of Evils*), Thomas Watson (seven books including *Heaven Taken by Storm* and *The Duty of Self Denial*) and Robert Bolton (four books including *A Treatise on Comforting Afflicted Consciences*). Edwards Reynolds, who was one of the Westminster Assembly divines, wrote up his expositions on Psalm 110. This 465-page treasure is also available.

We observed that the patriarchal leaders of the spiritual brotherhood lived exceptionally long lives, Laurence Chaderton until 1640, John Dod until 1645, and Arthur Hildesham until 1640. Among the more eminent leaders of the earlier part of the seventeenth century are Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), Thomas Taylor (1576-1633), Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1646), and Robert Bolton (1572-1631). In this period too we have the soul saving ministry of William Gouge (1575-1653) who ministered at Blackfriars, London, for 46 years. Blackfriars in that time was esteemed as the number one preaching center in London. It is believed that thousands were saved under the ministry of Gouge.

But now we remember three later leaders, beginning with John Owen.

John Owen (1616-83)

Deservedly nick-named The Prince of the Puritans, Owen's *Works* are first choice for those who prize sound divinity. Today his writings are available in twenty-four volumes and these together form the best source of theology in the English language.

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, but his nature as an intense scholar was such that sometimes he allowed himself only four hours sleep a night. That kind of regimen 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.

He took up his first pastorate in a village in Essex. Not long after that he was called to a London congregation where 2000 attended each Lord's Day.

Owen's gifts were soon recognized and he was invited to preach before Parliament where he became the favorite preacher. He 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.

In 1676 he lost his excellent wife by death. Such was the infant mortality of those times that they had experienced much sorrow in the loss of ten out of eleven children, only one surviving. Eighteen months after the death of his wife, Owen 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.

His writings reveal an analytical, formative and majestic mind. Foundational to all his works is a profound grasp of the doctrines of grace. Among his masterpieces are his *Mortification of Sin* (volume 6), *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, never bettered! (volume 3), *The Glory of Christ* (volume 1), and *The True Nature of a Gospel Church* (volume 16). Left behind (because he wrote it in Latin in 1661) was his work on *Biblical Theology* by which is meant the mean-

ing and history of revelation. Long before the twentieth century pioneer and champion of this subject, Geehardus Vos, produced his work, Owen was thinking his way through the theme. Owen's style in English is ponderous and requires concentration. Readers persevere with him because he is so rewarding. We are now indebted to Soli Deo Gloria publishers for the translation of Owen's Latin work on the nature and progress of theology, *Biblical Theology* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994) which reveals a delightfully lucid style, like the clearest trickling mountain stream, or 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!

Richard Baxter (1615-91)

Unlike many Puritan leaders who enjoyed the advantage of education in the prestigious universities Cambridge or Oxford, Baxter had to find his own way educationally. By dint of self-discipline he acquired learning which put him on par with the best Puritan writers. Yet there was a severe disadvantage since Baxter lacked exposure to other thinkers of stature. He was individualistic and eccentric in some points of theology. For instance, he was about the only famous Puritan who was a four-point Calvinist. His brand of soteriology was dubbed Baxterianism (rather like Amraldianism). Also he was neonomian! He regarded faith as the ground of salvation rather than being merely the instrument of salvation. It is Christ's righteousness alone that saves! The error of neonomianism is serious. Yet we need to remember that we do not attain heaven by scoring one hundred percent in theology. If every person who was muddle-headed in one or another area of truth was thereby deprived of heaven, that place would be very confined! Do not give up on Baxter at this point!

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 visitation and evangelism with an incredible zeal which was used to bring about a marvellous change in the town and which necessitated a greatly enlarged auditorium. The Puritans did not use the word "revival" but this is what we are talking about here, except that technically speaking it is better termed a visitation of the Spirit. There was something about Kidderminster which fired the imagination and the fervency of contemporary pastors.

There are other instances among the Puritans of a powerful work of the Spirit such as that under the ministry of Samuel Fairclough (1594-1677) who at Kedington, seventeen miles from Cambridge, saw the situation change from ignorance and profanity to the place where there was hardly any instance of ungodliness to be found.

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

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 2000 pages! It is all practical and helpful.

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 on Ezekiel 18 is extraordinarily perceptive and gripping, typically Puritan.

Another outright winner is Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*. If he attained 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 Saint's Everlasting Rest*.

John Bunyan (1628-88)

As a separatist, Bunyan does not qualify as a Puritan in the technical sense. Yet in spiritual experience, in doctrine, in preaching style, and in life, he is the perfect exemplar of the Puritans.

Bunyan's life takes us well beyond the closing date of 1662 into the era of dissent when he spent twelve years in prison. He had a blind daughter and was much needed at home. It was agonizing but he refused to compromise his conscience either by attending the Church of England or by quitting his preaching.

From a poor background, and a tinker by trade, Bunyan was devoid of formal education. In prison his library consisted of his Bible, a concordance, and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. His *Pilgrim's Progress* is a masterpiece, a classic 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. Bunyan's writing style and manner of English is a delight to every reader. His theology was robust and his written works enjoyed popularity equal to any of his peers.

Bunyan was by far the most imaginative, eloquent and compelling preacher of his time. 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 fact that Bunyan was a Baptist reminds us that what we might call Puritan Baptists were coming more into the picture in the second half of the seventeenth century, and today Baptists all over

the world are discovering the unexcelled legacy of the Puritans.

Why We Need the Puritans

Writing in the Introduction to *A Goodly Heritage* (Puritan Conference papers, 1958), J. I. Packer says:

The Puritans were strongest just where Protestants today are weakest, and their writings can give us more real help than those of any other body of Christian teachers, past or present, since the days of the apostles. This is a large claim, but it is not made irresponsibly. A moment's thought about the facts of the case will show its justification.

Consider the characteristic features of Puritan Christian-ity. The Puritans were men of outstanding intellectual power and spiritual insight, in whom the mental habits fostered by sober scholarship were linked with a flaming zeal for God and a minute acquaintance with the human heart. All their work betrays this unique fusion of gifts and graces. They had a radically God-centered outlook. Their appreciation of God's sovereign majesty was profound; their reverence in handling His Word was deep and sustained. They were patient, thorough and methodical to the last degree in searching the Scriptures; hence their grasp of the various threads and linkages in the web of revealed truth was firm and clear. They understood the ways of God with men, the glory of Christ the mediator, and the work of the Spirit in the believer and in the church, more richly, fully and accurately, perhaps than any since their day.

As new challenges confront evangelicals today we can obtain help from the Puritans. I conceive of some of these challenges as follows:

The Doctrine of Salvation

Pelagianism has become so rampant today as to turn sectors of evangelicalism into pseudo-Christianity. Salvation has been wrested out of the hands of God and is dispensed by the priests of decisionism. By use of grossly shallow methods, false converts are made in large numbers. The theory of the carnal Christian has been invented in order to accommodate these hypocrites who bear no marks of the new birth.

Puritan teaching was Reformed. Its central concern was the doctrine of Salvation. We only have to read the *Westminster Standards* to see that illustrated. The best single corrective for Arminianism today is John Owen's *A Display of Arminianism* and *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Works, volume 10). Owen shows, as did Luther before him, that the fallen will of man is in bondage. The notion of free will is the idol of the Arminians. Owen cogently expounds the matter of God's foreknowledge and the decrees of God.

In Owen's *Death of Death* he shows the intention of God to definitely save. If you can obtain a copy with Dr. Packer's introduction to that particular book it will help, and if you are troubled by these issues Dr. Packer's *Evangelism and Sovereignty of God* is recommended.

The Puritans' doctrine of salvation safeguards us from Arminianism on the one side and from hyper-Calvinism on the other. We are preserved from unwarranted rationalistic conclusions about the doctrines of grace when we read expositions such as John Howe's *The Redeemer's Tears Shed Over Lost Souls*, or John Flavel's eleven sermons on Revelation 3:20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." A further example from countless that could be cited is Richard Greenhill's sermon, "What Must and Can Persons do Toward their own Conversion," found in volume one of the six-volume set of *Puritan Sermons 1659-1689*, popularly known as *The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate* (Richard

Owen Roberts, Wheaton, Illinois, 1981). The amazing work of grace in salvation from its inception onwards is graphically described by John Bunyan in his book *The Holy War* which, after *The Pilgrim's Progress*, was his most popular work.

The Law, Reality of Sin, Judgment and the Necessity of Holiness

Related to the doctrine of Salvation is the nature of sin and the lost condition of the sinner. These issues were foremost in Puritan teaching and life. The conscience must be properly informed of the nature of sin and its ugliness before our holy God. They esteemed the Ten Commandments to be the instrument to define sin. The Puritan *Larger Catechism*, Question 99, asks:

What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments? Answer: That the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.

The Puritan way of preaching produced conviction of sin and Repentance. They believed it to be the height of happiness to have a clear conscience which was cleansed by the blood of Christ. They knew well the difference between true liberty and legalism. (See Samuel Bounds, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, Banner paperback.) Nothing, in their view, was more blessed than a good conscience before God. Modern evangelicalism is soft on sin and almost silent on Repentance.

Spiritual Experience

There could hardly be a more relevant book for those unhinged by the mindlessness of the "Toronto Blessing"

than John Owen's *Union and Communion with God* (Banner of Truth, paperback). Here he expounds the manner in which the believer's union and communion are experienced with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit, distinctively. The first question of the *Larger Catechism* sums up the Puritan view of enjoyment. "What is the chief and highest end of man? Answer: Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him for ever." This enjoyment is found in Puritan diaries. An example is Ralph Robinson (1614-55), author of *Christ is All and in All* (Soli Deo Gloria) who recorded that he loved prayer and fasting with all his heart.

Conflict in the Christian Life

Allied to the above is conflict. One of the best works ever to roll off the printing press is Gurnall's *The Christian in Complete Armour*. John Newton wrote of this thrilling exposition, "If I might read only one book beside the Bible, I would choose, *The Christian in Complete Armour* by Gurnall." The abridgement by David Wilkerson into three paperbacks is gold refined. Bishop J. C. Ryle, himself a nineteenth-century Puritan, said of Gurnall's *Armour*, "You will often find in a line and a half some great truth, put so concisely, and yet so fully, that you really marvel how so much thought could be got into so few words." And Spurgeon described Gurnall's work as "peerless and priceless; every line is full of wisdom; every sentence is suggestive."

Sometimes the conflict in the spiritual life can be desperate. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones found Richard Sibbes to be the balm of Gilead to his soul, especially his exposition of "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench" (Matt. 12:20).

Christian Unity

The Puritans were forced to compromise in many issues

not essential to Salvation. Apart from the time of the Commonwealth, about 1640 to 1660, Independency or Separatism was not an option unless you were prepared to be burned, beheaded or hanged! Some did take the risk, while many sailed for America. In a strange way the compulsion to be in one church had advantages, one of which was tolerance.

Today we are plagued with the nightmare of independency in which divisions are legion. Splits occur over many issues which should never be allowed to divide. The body of Christ is tormented with endless schisms.

The Puritans teach us about tolerance and about unity. There is a skill in knowing where to draw the line. The Scriptures forbid compromise on Justification by faith. David Clarkson, fellow pastor and successor to John Owen, expounds this in volume six of *Cripple Gate Exercises* where 620 pages are devoted to Roman Catholicism; it is very relevant for us today because of current pressures to compromise. The Marian martyrs died because they would not compromise over transubstantiation.

A Biblical Worldview

For the Puritans there was no disjunction between the sacred and the secular. They inscribed Holy to the Lord on the bells of the horses. In other words everything was subject to the direction of Scripture. This is wonderfully illustrated in Baxter's *Christian Directory*. Every sphere of life and every activity, work and recreation is to be reclaimed to the glory of God.

The Christian Family

It is hardly too much to say that the Puritans created the Christian family in the English-speaking world. The Puritan ethic of marriage was to look not for a partner whom you do love passionately at this moment, but rather one whom you

can love steadily as your best friend for life, and then to proceed with God's help to do just that. 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 ethic of home life was based on maintaining order, courtesy, and family worship. Goodwill, patience, consistency, and an encouraging attitude were seen as the essential domestic virtues. (Quoted from *The Quest for Godliness—The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* by J. I. Packer.)

Work and Sabbath

The battle for the Lord's Day was initiated toward the end of Elizabeth's reign and won decisively during the first half of the seventeenth century. The Puritans gave England the English Sunday. The Puritans loved and enjoyed the Lord's Day and this is reflected in Swinnock's personification of the Lord's Day:

Hail thou that art highly favoured by God, thou map of heaven, thou golden spot of the week, thou market day of the soul, thou daybreak of eternal brightness, thou queen of days. On thee light was created, the Holy Spirit descended, life hath been restored, Satan subdued, sin mortified, souls sanctified and the grave, death and hell conquered!

The advantages of a whole day's conference and spiritual feasting once a week were immense. The Puritans virtually shaped the character of the nation by centralizing the Lord's Day as the day of days. Wherever this practice has been exported to other nations benefits have accrued.

The Puritan Hope

In 1651 Elnathan Parr's *Commentary on Romans* was published. In it he vigorously follows the context of Paul's argu-

ment in the eleventh chapter. The larger calling of the Jews will be the signal of great worldwide success for the Gospel. The Puritans based their optimism for the future success of biblical Christianity on the basic principle that Christ will reign until His enemies become His footstool. This optimism is reflected in the *Larger Catechism*.

Question 191. What do we pray for in the second petition?

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

Urgently needed is the recovery of the Puritan Hope (see Iain Murray's book with that title). Jonathan Edwards, David Bogue, William Carey, Adoniram Judson and Henry Martyn are examples of those who were inspired by the Puritan view that Christ will be glorified internationally through the triumph of the Gospel.

Puritan Preaching

The Puritan story is a story of heaven-sent preachers. Imperatives about preaching from that time are relevant.

1) Preaching must be viewed as the primary means of grace. To the Puritans preaching was the apex of public worship. The Holy Spirit applies the Word in power through preaching, and preaching is the primary means of conversion. It pleases God through the foolishness of preaching (that which worldly people regard as foolish) to save sinners. It is primarily through preaching that believers are built up in their faith.

2) Preaching must be expository and didactic. Preparation is required to open up the meaning of the text of Scripture within its context. The Puritans almost always preached through passages. In this way the whole counsel of God was taught. Into expository preaching the Puritans wove solid

teaching. An example of this is Gurnall's treatise on *The Complete Armour of God*. In 1,176 pages, nine verses (Eph 6:10-18) are opened up: an entire body of doctrinal and practical divinity in the context of spiritual warfare.

Doctrinal application is needful inasmuch as wrong ideas of God and Salvation must be corrected and biblical thinking created. "Reprove only the errors which currently trouble the church," said Perkins. "Leave others alone if they lie dead in past history."

3) Preaching must be applicatory. Preaching is unique inasmuch as the whole man—mind, heart, conscience, will—is addressed. Remember William Perkins and his categories of hearers. The preparation of a doctrinal lecture is easy. To preach so as to change and reform lives requires application. That application can come only through prayer. Hence the apostles declared that they must give themselves to prayer and the Word (Acts 6:4). Most Puritan preaching concluded with practical applications. Robert Harris, one of John Dod's disciples, complained that too many spent far too much time on doctrine and not nearly enough on application. He confessed that he began in his preparation with application and worked backwards!

4) Preaching must be evangelistic. The good news is for sinners. Sinners become such under the searching character of the holiness of God and his moral law. If there is not conviction there can be no conversion. Bunyan's emulation of Peter preaching to the Jerusalem sinners, is preaching in full evangelistic flow. "Repent and be baptized every one of you."

5) Preaching must be powerful. The subject matter is the Father, His Son, the Holy Spirit, and eternal Salvation. The Good News concerns the most glorious matter and therefore is so to be consistently presented in a gripping, scintillating way. The men on the road to Emmaus asked, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Remember that John Dod's

hearers, even after two hours of preaching, called out and urged him to continue.

6) Preaching should be popular in its style. The language of the Puritans was homely, pithy and illustrative. Crowds consisting of all classes of people heard them gladly. No group of preachers ever labored more earnestly to make themselves understood by their hearers. Robert Harris “could so cook his meat that he could make it relish to every palate”! Richard Mather aimed “to shoot his arrows not over peoples’ heads but into their hearts!”

7) Preaching requires prayer and diligent study. During the short time of freedom in the Commonwealth Period many wild sects sprang up, and some imagined that they had direct inspiration from heaven when in fact they were simply fanatics. Preaching requires disciplined study together with reliance on the Holy Spirit.

8) Preaching must respect the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. We never find the Puritans trying to do the work of Regeneration for the Holy Spirit. We never find them using the altar call or applying artificial means of pressure. We never find them bypassing the mind or the heart in trying to get a visible result by way of a decision. They understood well the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

I cited the statement made by Dr. Packer in 1959: “The Puritans were strongest just where Protestants today are weakest, and their writings can give us more real help than those of any other body of Christian teachers, past or present, since the days of the apostles.” Is this exaggerated? I trust that the observations that have just been made show that the claim truly warranted.

Literature on Puritanism

The story of the development of the Puritan movement

has not yet found an historian equal to the task. There is so much to comprehend that this is not surprising. Every effort is bound to labor under the defect of imperfect acquaintance with the literature of Puritanism itself.

There are several important reference books. I will mention just a few that I have found helpful.

Daniel Neal, whose volumes were first published in 1731, tells the political and ecclesiastical story from King Henry to the death of Charles II. To accomplish this he takes 1,975 pages!

Recently published is Benjamin Brook’s *The Lives of the Puritans* (Soli Deo Gloria). Brook gives us 450 biographies in three volumes (1500 pages).

William Haller’s *The Rise of Puritanism* first appeared in 1938. This is an important reference work on the story of the Puritan Brotherhood. Haller himself made no profession of faith.

Recommended is Leland Ryken’s *Worldly Saints—The Puritans As they Really Were* (Zondervan 1986). Also *The Genius of Puritanism* by Peter Lewis (Soli Deo Gloria).

The Ongoing Influence of the Puritans

The influence of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* in Presbyterian denominations and of *The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith* is extensive. In recent years the *1689 Confession* has been translated into a number of foreign languages.

The vision for abridging and simplifying some of the most useful Puritan writings has been implemented by Grace Publications, Abingdon, Oxon England. (Grace Baptist Mission in England organizes these translations and publications.) The idea originated through Tamil-speaking Christians in South India. John Owen’s book, *Death of Death*, was chosen and renamed *Life by his Death*. One of the early fruits of this book was the conversion of a Tamil Hindu farmer in Sri Lanka.

The book was published in Tamil in 1981. Four of Owen's titles are now printed in a variety of languages. For instance, *The Glory of Christ* is available in Korean, Portuguese, Spanish and Tamil.

Flavel's *Providence of God* is now in Hebrew, Spanish and Tamil, and Jeremiah Burrough's *The Divine Art of Contentment*, now titled *Learning to Be Happy*, is in Albanian, Arabic, French, Indonesian, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Author

Rev. Erroll Hulse, who worked with the Banner of Truth Trust, serves on the pastoral team of Leeds Reformed Baptist Church, Leeds, England, and is editor of *Reformation Today*, a valuable publication for those interested in reformation worldwide, especially Baptist readers. His perspective is especially profited by his travels to numerous countries and mission situations.