

## The Puritans

According to Thomas Fuller the church historian the term Puritan came into use about the year 1564.

However we could say that just as there were Reformers before the Reformation, so there were Puritans before the name became recognised as descriptive of a certain body of Christian believers.

John Wycliffe 1330-1384, the Lollards, William Tyndale 1494?-1536 might well have been described as Puritans though they lived before this time.

At first it was the term used to describe those who wanted the Protestant reformation to be carried out more thoroughly [some called them 'a hotter kind of Protestant'] the term later towards the middle of the 17th-century came to be applied to those in the political realm who argued for the constitutional rights and liberties of the people against the encroachments of the crown.

A very useful illustration of what Puritanism is about can be given from the experience of the English church, meeting in Frankfurt Germany in 1554.

During the time of Queen Mary's persecution of Protestants many sought refuge on the Continent.

*'When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another' Matthew 10 v 23*

Embsay, Wessel, Strasburg, Zurich, Geneva were all places where English exiles could be found. However in Frankfurt a large number of exiles were given permission to use the French church for their services. They agreed to use the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI (the English Josiah), as the basis of their worship, though taking the liberty to amend those parts that they considered unscriptural.

After a short time they invited John Knox [1513-72] to be their minister, who accepted invitation and came to them from Geneva where he also was in exile.

However Knox and others still had some reservations in regard to the Prayer Book in use, and subsequently rolled to John Calvin in Geneva to seek his opinion on it. Calvin gave this famous reply;

*'In the liturgy of England I see that there are many tolerable foolish things. By these words I mean that there is not that purity which is to be desired. These vices, though they cannot at the first day be amended, yet, seeing there is no manifest impiety in them, then e-mail for the season be tolerated. Therefore it is lawful to begin with such rudiments; but it behoves the learned the grave, and godly ministers of Christ to enterprise further, and to set forth something more filed from rust and purer. If godly religion had flourished to this day in England, there ought to have been a thing better corrected, and many things clean taken away.. Now when these principles be overthrown, a church must be set up in another place, where ye may freely make an order again'*

Troubles in Frankfurt - William Whittingham. Page 51

As a result of this reply a modified order of service was agreed on, and all continued

happily, until another group of exiles arrived at Frankfurt under the leadership of a certain Dr Cox. He and his party cause the division in the church by insisting on a rigid conformity to the Prayer Book service. John Knox eventually left the church and returned to Geneva. Here he published the service will, after the manner of its revision at Frankfurt and called it 'The Order of Geneva'.

In the preface to this Order of Geneva he said that the order of the church must be '*limited within the compass of Holy Scripture*'. In other words the elements of church worship and practice must be the elements and only those elements of which we have expressed permission for doing in Scripture.

*Reference was also made to the' dilatory proceedings of bishops in reforming the church and removing from it offensive ceremonies is one cause of the heavy judgments of God upon land'*

Page 174 S. F. Paul

Now this conflict in Frankfurt was eventually to be played out in the history of the English church. In the forms of time Mary Tudor daughter of Catherine of Aragon died [1558] and Elizabeth the first, daughter of Anne Boleyn succeeded to the English throne

The returning exiles who impatient at the rate of reformation in the church and wanted the Church of England to be as the reformed churches they had known and helped to build on the continent.

### **The Growth of Puritanism**

As we have seen the Puritan movement grew up within the Church of England, and sought a more thoroughgoing reformation, in terms of a revised Prayer Book and the abolition of clerical vestments.

William Tyndale is often seen as the prototype of the true Puritan, Biblical, thorough in his devotion to Christ, having no-thought of waiting for the church's reformation to come about through civil or state legislation.

John Knox is often described as the founder of Puritanism, and his ministry amongst the English exiles at Frankfurt, Germany in the days of the Marian persecution is seen as being the prototype for the movement's developments in the days of Queen Elizabeth I.

The Puritans within the Established Church in the days of Queen Elizabeth I were seeking more reform than the Queen was prepared to grant. She defined the limits that she was prepared for the Reformation in the Established Church to go in the various acts passed during her reign. These insisted on the exclusive use of the Book of Common Prayer, the wearing of vestments, and strict adherence to the Episcopal form of church government.

At this point we can begin to identify various types of Puritan emerging.

I. There were the Anglican Puritans, and indeed we may note that all the original Puritans were Anglicans. These were content to work within the system and leave the bishops in place; many of them were content with the Episcopal order of church government.

Their chief aim was to rid the church of every vestige of popery, but they were content to work slowly seeking to bring change through political/legal reforms through the civil courts and magistrates.

2. There were others that were also content to work slowly from within the Anglican Church but this second group were not content with the Episcopal system. These wanted to abolish bishops and archbishops etc. And implement a Presbyterian system of church government as later came about in Scotland. The chief spokesman of this group was Thomas Cartwright Professor at Cambridge University who in 1570 lectured on the Book of Acts, arguing that Acts taught a Presbyterian form of church government.

*'Thomas Cartwright, Lady Margaret Professor in divinity, so ably advocated the Puritan cause in his lectures to the students, while opening up the Scriptures as he conscientiously believed them, and not from any desire to incite disobedience, he would often contending against the vestments and ceremonies appointed by the English Prayer Book, raise objections also to the government of the church by bishops. The learning and ability with which he urged his views drew large audiences to hear him, so that sometimes it became necessary to remove the church windows, as there was not sufficient room within the building. He condensed his objections to the church polity into the following six points:*

*1 The names and functions of archbishops and archdeacons ought to be abolished, as having no foundation in Scripture.*

*2 The offices of the lawful ministers of the church, viz. bishops and deacons, ought to be reduced to the apostolical institution; the bishop to preach the Word of God and pray and deacons to take care of the poor.*

*3. Government of the church ought not to be entrusted with bishops' chancellors, or the officials of archdeacons, but every church should be governed by its own minister and presbyters.*

*4. Ministers or not to be at large, but everyone should have the charge of a certain flock.*

*5. Nobody should ask, or stand as a candidate, for the ministry.*

*6 Bishops should not be created by civil authority but ought to be fairly chosen by the church.*

*Such a bold advocacy against the prescribed order and uniformity of the church occasioned much opposition from the bishops, and Grindal, now Archbishop of York requested Secretary Cecil, Chancellor of the University, to stay such proceedings. As a result the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Whitgift, removed Cartwright from the Professor's chair, which occasioned the following recommendation of him by his colleagues;*

*'It is not necessary for us to say much of Cartwright's general behaviour as we are persuaded that no man can accuse him of any wickedness, or convicted of any scandal in his whole life..... We know that his religion is sincere and free from blemish; for he has not only emerged from the vast ocean of papistical heresies, and cleansed himself with the purest waters of the Christian religion, but as at a rock he strikes at those futile and trifling opinions which are daily disseminated. He adheres to the Holy Scriptures the most certain rule of faith and practice'*

*This prevented his severance from the University for time, but eventually Whitgift secured his expulsion, and he went abroad. There Beza said of him, 'Here is now with us your countryman, Thomas Cartwright, than whom I think the sun does not see a more learned man.'*

S. F. Paul Page 182.

[However Episcopacy survived in England until the Scots made its abolition the price of their military alliance in 1642.]

3. We can also identify the emergence of another group that is, the Puritan Separatist. The first Separatist congregation was founded in 1567 in London by Richard Fitz. This group was not calling for the reformation of the Church of England but rather its dissolution. The Separatist entirely rejected the concept of a state church.

They believed in contrast to the Anglican Puritans in reformation without tarrying for the magistrate. They saw as entirely unscriptural the concept of reforming the Church through the medium of the civil courts. The three foremost Separatists Henry Barrow, John Greenwood and John Penry were put to death for their principles in 1593.

4. Lastly we can identify another strand of Puritanism, similar to the above [i.e. the Separatists] that is the group that came to be known as the Independents, and later the Congregationalists. This group had an affinity with the above, but existed as a different group until well into the 17th century.

The Independents recognised the Church of England as a true church and had fellowship with it. They however sought for a national church to be made up of a fellowship of independent self-governing churches.

It was this system that briefly prevailed in this country in the days of Oliver Cromwell. Robert Browne and Robert Harrison were amongst the foremost of the early Independent leaders.

Dr Martin Lloyd Jones defined the difference between the Separatists and the Independents as follows;

*'The Independents did not regard the Church of England as being altogether wrong, they did not oppose occasional attendance at the services of the Church of England, and indeed were not really opposed to the notion of a state church as such. Oliver Cromwell,*

*for instance was a true Independent, but he continued the tithe system when he came to authority and to power and his government took an active part in organising the religious life of the country.'*

The Puritans. Page 152.

Dr Lloyd Jones quotes Robert Bailey a Scottish member of the Westminster Assembly 1643-1647 commenting on the Independents of London.

*'They as yet do not consist of much within 1000 persons; men, women, and all who to this day put themselves in any known congregation of that way, being reckoned'. Then follows an unsolicited testimonial;' but setting aside numbers, for other respects they are of so eminent condition, but not any nor all the rest of the sects are comparable to them'. He is talking them in particular about the Independents. You observe that they were small in number in 1645, less than 1000, he thinks, in London.*

*Then, there is some attempt at the definition. I trust that it is quite clear that the Independents did not believe in breaking altogether with the Church of England. They were prepared to grant that the Church of England was a true church, that at any rate that there were true Churches within the Church of England, and true Christians; and they did not cut themselves off entirely. They believed in 'occasional conformity' and they would on certain occasions, Join in with the Episcopalians in services' they have been rightly called semi separatists.'*

ibid 154

We can add at this point that it was out of the Separatist/Independent constituency that the first Baptists appeared.

*'From the same root of Separatism there stemmed the English Baptists, bearing evident affinities with the Anabaptists of the continent in many respects, though not of direct affiliation. The father and founder of the organised Baptists of England and of the General Baptists in particular John Smyth, had been successively an Anglican clergyman and Minister of an Independent church, before parting from the latter on the issue of infant baptism. Becoming convinced that the church must be constituted only on the basis of the baptism of professed believers, he proceeded first to re baptise himself, and then all his congregation, while still in exile at Amsterdam. Even in the method of baptism however he was traditional, using affusion from a basin, not immersion. Equally important was his espousal of the Arminian opinion that Christ died for all, in opposition to the predominant Calvinist doctrine that Christ died only for the elect. Actually the first church of English Baptists was thus founded on foreign soil; and to one of Smyth's followers, Thomas Helwys, a lawyer and layman, fell the honour of establishing the first Baptist Church in England and at Spitalfields in 1612. Moreover, both Smyth and Helwys were pioneers in their enunciation of the principle of religious toleration and freedom of conscience. Smyth, in denying the rights of the magistrate to compel adherence to any church, insisted that he must' leave the Christian religion free to every man's conscience', since Christ only is the King and lawgiver of the church and conscience. Similarly Helwys affirmed that' man's religion to God is betwixt God and themselves; the King shall not answer for it, neither may the King be judge between God and man'. Here was a new*

*voice, as yet little heeded, but pregnant with hope for the future. Almost a generation later between 1633 and 1638, there appeared the Particular or Calvinistic Baptists, emerging as a secession from Independency on the issue of infant baptism; and practising from the first baptism by immersion, in which they were shortly followed by the General Baptists'.*

The English Religious Tradition. Norman Sykes page 32.

Returning now again to the order of events, with the passing of Elizabeth Ist and the accession of James Ist [1603-1625] the Puritans within the Church of England believed that their hour had come. James Ist, son of Mary Queen of Scots had been brought up the Presbyterians and so it was felt that upon his coming to the English throne the Presbyterian cause would triumph.

This however proved false. The King in fact despised Presbyterianism and Puritanism and vowed he would hary them out of the kingdom. His watchword became 'no bishop no King'.

James I son Charles I came to the throne in 1625 and reigned until 1649. During this time William Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury and set in motion the propagation of Arminian views in theology, compiled with a rigorous enforcement of conformity to the Book of Common Prayer, and the reintroduction of many pre- Reformation practices in the church services. The communion table was removed back into the position of the altar in pre- Reformation times, altar candles were openly used and richly adorned vestments. Laud became the avowed enemy of the Puritans.

Between 1629 - 1640 Charles ruled without ever calling sitting of Parliament. All this produced resentment and eventually a backlash. Lauds imposition of his views upon the church and the King's contempt of Parliament brought the Parliament to form an alliance with the Scots Presbyterians. These also had been aggrieved by Laud's trying to impose upon them the Book of Common Prayer. These two groups now made common cause against the King.

By 1642 the Civil War had begun and the armies of Charles Ist fought the armies of Parliament.

In 1643 the Westminster Assembly sat and all seemed set to implement the Presbyterian system as the mode of government within the National Church. However there were still elements within the Presbyterians group which would have supported Charles I. The crisis developed and Cromwell was persuaded of the necessity of the King's execution. Charles I was subsequently executed in 1649 and Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector of England.

Cromwell favoured the Independent system of church government and the National Church was organised on these principles between 1649 and 1660. It has been rightly argued that this period was one of the finest in English church history. For the first time there was toleration for most of the normal types of Protestants. The church was still established by the State, but the minister might be from any one of the main Puritan

groups. The Prayer Book was not to be used though Cromwell did not enforce this rigorously. Cromwell anticipated and began to establish many of the religious liberties that we now take for granted.

On Cromwell's death his son Richard was appointed successor. However beset with enemies, and the failure of men who should have supported him, also lacking the leadership qualities of his father he could not continue. England was now without a leader.

The future Charles II was making moves in Europe and Scotland to regain power. The Presbyterians in Scotland saw their opportunity of having the Westminster Confession and the Solemn League and Covenant form the basis of a new kind of religious union in England and Scotland. Some of them began to support Charles's attempts to regain the throne.

If the Presbyterians had helped replace the King on the throne his restoration certainly did not help their cause. Charles's reign known as the Restoration has gone down in history as one of the most immoral and pleasure loving times in English history. Charles was no Presbyterian, even though he had signed The Solemn League and Covenant in 1650 when he was courting the Scots support. He immediately re-established Anglicanism in preference to the Cromwellian legislation.

Britannica says 'These Puritans were out manoeuvred in their attempt to obtain a comprehensive church, however, by those who favoured the strict Episcopal pattern. A new Act of Uniformity was passed on May 19th 1662, the Act required the re-ordination of many ministers, and also unconditional consent to the Book of Common Prayer. Between 1616 and when the Act was enforced on August 24, 1662, almost 2000 Puritan ministers were ejected from their positions.

As a result of The Act of Uniformity, English Puritanism entered a period of great persecution. The Conventicle Act of 1664 punished any person over 16 years of age for attending a religious meeting not conducted according to the Book of Common Prayer. The Five Mile Act as 1665 prohibited any ejected Minister from living within five miles of a corporation, town or any place where he had formerly served. Still, some Puritans did not give up the idea of comprehension [inclusiveness of various persuasions], there were conferences with sympathetic bishops and brief periods of indulgence for Puritans to preach, but fines and imprisonments *were the* lot of Puritans in this period.

Dr Martin Lloyd Jones regarded 1662 as the final defeat of the Puritans within the Church of England to bring about Reformation from within.

*'What happened in 1662 was a most important event; it was a very real turning point. The hope of the Puritans was finally dashed to the ground. It was their final defeat, and the exploding of all their longings'*

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However it was not the defeat for Puritanism as such, Puritanism continues to reappear within the life of the church.

It is to the identification of these continuing marks of Puritanism that we must now look.

Again history is able to help us here.

In 1654 Oliver Cromwell and Parliament called upon the leading Puritan ministers, representing the various Puritan groupings to gather together and discuss and come to an agreement upon what they regarded to be the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. To set out a statement of the foundational truths upon which all strands of Puritanism could agree.

Those who gathered were;

Mr Richard Baxter, Dr John Owen, Dr Thomas Goodwin, Dr Cheynel. Mr Marshall, Mr Reyner, Mr Nye, Mr Sydrach Simpson, Mr Vines, Mr Manton, Mr Jacomb.

Richard Baxter tried to short-circuit these discussions by proposing that,

The Apostle's Creed  
The Lord's Prayer.  
The Ten Commandments.

Would be a sufficient statement of the foundations of Christian teaching. However this was not agreed to and the following 16 statements were drawn up and accepted:

Here they are:

1. That the Holy Scripture is that rule of knowing God and living unto Him which whoso does not believe cannot be saved.
2. That there is a God who is the Creator, Governor and judge of the world, which is to be received by faith, and every other way of the knowledge of Him is insufficient.
3. That this God who is the Creator is eternally distinct from all creatures in His Being and Blessedness.
4. That this God is One in Three Persons or subsistences.
5. That Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and Man without the knowledge of whom there is no salvation.
6. That this Jesus Christ is the true God.
7. That this Jesus Christ is also true Man.
8. That this Jesus Christ is God and Man in One Person.
9. That this Jesus Christ is our Redeemer, who by paying a ransom and bearing our sins has made satisfaction for them.

10. That this same Lord Jesus Christ is He that was Crucified at Jerusalem, and rose again and descended into Heaven.

11. That this same Jesus Christ being the only God and Man in One Person remains for ever a distinct Person from all saints and angels notwithstanding their union and communion with Him.

12. That all men by nature were dead in sins and trespasses, and no man can be saved unless he be born again, repent and believe.

13. That we are justified and saved by grace and faith in Jesus Christ and not by works.

14. That to continue in any known sin upon what pretence or principle soever is damnable.

15. That God is to be worshipped according to His own will, and whosoever shall forsake and despise all the duties of His worship cannot be saved.

16. That the dead shall rise, and that there is a day of judgment wherein all shall appear, some to go into everlasting life and some into everlasting condemnation.

We have the authority of Richard Baxter for saying that it was Dr John Owen who worded those Articles, that Dr Goodwin and Mr. Nye and Mr. Simpson were his assistants, that Dr Reynolds was the scribe and that Mr. Marshall, a sober, worthy man did something, but the rest were little better than passive.

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### **Characteristic Puritan teaching in respect to Worship**

The Puritans made the Word of God the rule of their worship. We call it the Regulative Principle. Only that which Scripture expressly permits is to be part of worship. The difference between Anglican and Puritan here is that the Anglicans would allow those things which Scripture does not expressly forbid, whereas the Puritan will only allow that which Scripture expressly sanctions.

When Archbishop Laud spoke of the 'Beauty of Holiness' he meant the ornaments and embellishments of pre-Reformation man invented aspects of worship that he was re-introducing. When the Puritans spoke of the 'Beauty of Holiness' he meant worship that is in accordance with God's Word, and directed and empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

The Puritans favoured extempore prayer, they did not totally reject read prayers. Many of them did not totally reject the Book of Common Prayer, but objected to being bound entirely by it, and to some of the statements found within it.

The Puritan laid great store by the public reading of God's Word.

The Puritan accounted preaching as vital for the ongoing progress and maintenance of the

church. It is by 'the foolishness of preaching', that God ordains to save those that believe. He believed that preaching is best in which there is most of God and least of man.

*'When vain flourishes of wit and words were declined, and the demonstration of God's Spirit and power studied.'*

He considered good preaching to be that which could be best understood and best remembered. He looked for preaching that challenged the conscience and stirred the heart to love and fear God.

### ***Puritans and the Lord's Day***

The Puritan conscientiously kept the Lord's Day Holy. He regarded it as 'the market day of the soul'. He got all things ready, all business done and attended to, the house in order, his heart ready and prepared. The Puritan rose early and set his mind on the things of God.

He regarded the Lord's Supper as food for his soul, and he watched himself that he might always have an appetite for it, he prepared his heart and life to receive it.

The Puritan liked the church building to be decently maintained but not highly adorned.

He delighted in the singing of the Psalms but not in church music that was in any way worldly or gave opportunity for human display.

### **The Puritan in Daily life.**

In daily life he avoided excess and in dress all unnecessary expense or displays of vanity. The Puritan was well read and took life seriously. Neil Postman, in his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, notes:

*'Between 1640 and 1700, the literacy rate for men in the Puritan colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut was somewhere between 89% and 95%, quite probably the highest concentration of literate males to be found anywhere in the world at that time. The literacy rate for women in those same colonies is estimated to run as high as 62 percent in the years 1681 to 1697.'*

The Puritan was grounded and confident in the things of God.

*'He was immovable in all times, so that they who in the midst of many opinions have lost the view of true religion may return to him and find it'*

John Gere.

The Puritan was contented in God and trusted in him in the face of almost overwhelming difficulties and troubles. Ian Murray writes;

*'Through a wide personal acquaintance with God the Puritan had come to a settled persuasion of about the sureness and goodness of His providential government. They believed that God reigns and that He works all things together for go for good -even affliction, suffering and death-to them that love Him and who are the called according to his purpose. They believed, further, that divine providence enters into the smallest details of life and that it is therefore a sin not to trust in Him at all times. Hundreds of examples of these beliefs could be found in their lives. When Thomas Hooker was about to leave England he was being pursued to the coast by agents of the government. A friend accompanied him as they rode on horseback to the waiting ship and, conscious of the nearness of their pursuers, he said anxiously to Hooker, Sir, what if the wind should not be fair when you come to the vessel?' To which Hooker instantly replied, 'Brother, let us leave that with Him who keeps the wind in the hollow of His hand.' Again, once, in New England, John Wilson was with a group of soldiers when they saw an Indian carrying off a young Englishwoman in a canoe. The canoe was within gunshot range but was moving so swiftly through the water that they were afraid to shoot in case they hit the woman. Do not fear, Wilson exhorted them, 'God will direct the bullet!' And so it proved. It must be said that the contentment of these Christians under affliction was due to the spiritual consolations which they received in Christ.'*

Characteristics of the First Christian Society in America page 8.

A further characteristic of the Puritans was that they were marked by a genuine spirit of tolerance. Flynn comments on Cromwell's attitude towards the Jews.

*'At that time when popular feeling was against the Jew's, he was favourable to their residence in England; and, as evidence of the perpetuation of his views, to this day the English Puritan takes the warmest interest in their spiritual and temporal welfare, generously supporting societies whose object is their conversion to Christianity and their rights to the restoration of their national life.'*

Page 32 The Influence of Puritanism.

The Puritans were characterised by a love of truth and a hating lies;

*'So far as the English love truth, hate lies, to keep faith, detest shams, countenance honesty, they walk where Hampden and Pym and Baxter walked, is true to the Puritan type at its best. Nor one will maintained that to Puritanism alone such excellences are due, but justice requires that it be credited with a large share in producing them'*

ibid page 39.

J.I Packer credits the English Puritans with virtually creating the concept of the family as we have come to know it in the English-speaking world today, saying *'in the same sense in which, under God they were creators of the English Christian Sunday, so they were creators of the English Christian marriage, the English Christian family, and the English Christian home'*

*'In considering our indebtedness to the Puritans, it should never be forgotten by those who value English home life that they gave it to us.' For as we conceive it now,' writes J. R. Green, it 'was the creation of the Puritan.' If Puritanism occasioned the loss of passion, the caprice, the subtle and tender way of dealing, the breadth of sympathy, the quick pulse of delight' of the Elizabethan age, 'on the other hand life gained in moral grandure, in a sense of the dignity of manhood, in orderliness and equitable force. The larger geniality of the age that had passed away was replaced by an intense tenderness within the narrower circle of the home l'. Gravity and seriousness reigned there, softened and warmed by family love, until the home of the honest, upright Englishman has become the sweetest and purest thing on earth.'*

*Flynn page 75.*

### **The Puritans and Democracy.**

It can be safely said that wherever we see true democracy, the principle that the will of the people must prevail and the prominence of the lay element in the church there you have Puritanism under whatever new or old name it may be pleased to designate itself. It is not without significance that the statue of Oliver Cromwell stands outside the House of Commons. Significantly Cromwell believed that democracy and freedom could not stand apart from Godliness. It is also worth noting that Cromwell and the Puritans contributed to the freedom and greatness of our country in reviving Elizabeth I st's policy of making England 'Mistress of the Seas'.

Further the Puritans believed that the man's private life did affect his public life. In Puritan times' *morality and religion became the sole qualifications insisted upon by the Court'*.

In the whole history of modern Europe, Oliver Cromwell was the one ruler into whose presence no vicious man or scoundrel could come, and into whose service no such man could enter.

### **The Puritans and the Nonconformist Conscience.**

The nonconformist conscience has a long and illustrious history going back to Puritan times, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it denounced slavery and helped to bring about its downfall, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it supported the Factory Acts and the Movement for prison reform, it stood against the abuse of alcohol and it was said 'hated the opium traffic with a perfectly hatred.' It encouraged and advanced the principle of universal education, a restful Sabbath, fair play for the underprivileged, and over the years it has been one of the chief promoters of public righteousness, it has stood against governmental interference with personal liberty. It sternly condemns the sins of self indulgence, sexual vice and gambling. It has consistently stands on the side of righteousness even when that that side is far from popular..

We might list some of the virtues that can be characterised as Puritan virtues and characteristics as follows;

Individual conscience, equality, and private property, freedom of religion, assembly, speech and the press, the work ethic, moral rectitude, thrift, personal initiative, representative democracy, the rule of law, the responsibility of rulers, and the responsibility and privilege to serve God. It continues to uphold the great Reformation motto, Soli Deo Gloria.

### ***Puritanism and the Peace of the Nation.***

The constitutional monarchy which Cromwell and the Puritans helped to create meant that England never had the bloody revolutions-actual and attempted-associated with so many European countries from France in 1789 to Russia in 1917.

We can therefore trace back the peacefulness, unity and civilisation of our country to the godliness, courage and determination with which our Puritan forebears fought tyranny in the mid 17th century. Those times helped establish the idea that England was a Protestant nation, and an entrenched consensus of this view that lived on after the restoration and to the present-day.

### **Puritanism and Maturity**

*'Maturity is a compound of wisdom, goodwill, resilience, and creativity. The Puritan is exemplified maturity, we do not. The Puritans by contrast, as a body were giants. They were great souls serving a great God. In them clear headed passion and warm hearted, compassion combined. Visionary and practical, idealistic and realistic too, goal orientated and methodical, they were great believers, great hoppers, great doers, and great sufferers. But their sufferings, both sides of the ocean (in old England from the authorities and in New England from the elements), seasoned and ripened them till they gained a stature that was nothing short of heroic. Ease and luxury, such as our affluence brings us today, do not make for maturity; hardship and struggle however do, and the Puritans battle against the evangelical and climatic wilderness in which God set them producer virility of character, undaunted and unsinkable, rising above discouragement and fears for which the true precedents and models are men like Moses and Nehemiah, and Peter after Pentecost and the apostle Paul.*

*Spiritual warfare made the Puritans what they were. They accepted to conflict as their calling, seeing themselves as their Lord's soldier – pilgrims, just as Bunyan's allegory, and not expected to be able to advance a single step without opposition of one sort or another. Wrote John Geree, in his tract *The Character of an Old English Puritan or Nonconformist* (1646): 'his whole life he encountered a warfare, wherein Christ was his captain, his arms, prayers and tears. The Cross his banner and his word (motto) Vincit qui patitur (he who suffers conquers).*

*The Puritans lost, more or less, every public battle that they fought. Those who stayed in England did not change the Church of England as they hoped to do, nor did they revive more than a minority of its adherents, and eventually they were driven out of Anglicanism*

*by calculated pressure on their consciences. Those who crossed the Atlantic failed to establish new Jerusalem in New England; for the first fifty years their little colonies barely survived. They hung on by the skin of their teeth. But the moral and spiritual victories that the Puritans won by keeping sweet, peaceful, patient, obedient, and hopeful under sustained and seemingly intolerable pressures and frustrations give them a place of high honour in the believers' hall of fame were Hebrews 11 is the first gallery. It was out of this constant furnace experience that their maturity was wrought and their wisdom concerning discipleship was refined.'*

Among God's Giants     J I Packer p 24