

The Puritans:  
Their History and Heroics  
STEVEN J. LAWSON

John Owen:  
A Word-Centered Preacher  
SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON

John Bunyan:  
The Faithful Tinker  
JOEL R. BEEKE

# EXPOSITOR

A PUBLICATION OF ONEPASSION MINISTRIES

INTRODUCING

THE PULPIT *with*  
JOHN MACARTHUR

SPECIAL FEATURES

George Whitefield  
& the Puritans

THOMAS S. KIDD

Benjamin Keach:  
Reflections on  
Regeneration  
& Conversion

MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN

THE

*Puritans*



ISSUE

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## ENCOUNTERING THE *Puritans*

I will never forget the first time I encountered a Puritan book. I was in my first year of seminary and standing in the bookstore. As I was browsing through the books, I noticed one in particular, *A Body of Divinity*. Pulling it off the shelf, I could see it was written by Thomas Watson. Being unfamiliar with the author, I was curious to know more.

As I opened the book to the table of contents, what first struck me was how God-centered the chapter titles were. The entire first page addressed, essentially, the being and attributes of God. The second page covered the rest of theology. I remember thinking to myself that there is more of God in the table of contents of this book than there is in some entire Christian books I had read.

Not knowing who Thomas Watson was, I turned the page and discovered that the foreword was written by none other than Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The glowing way with which Spurgeon spoke of this author drew me to want to read this book. I bought it, took it home with me, and began to read it. It was as though I was suddenly transported to another world. I was a single man and lived alone, so I ate every meal by myself. But after I discovered this book, Thomas Watson became my roommate and constant companion. I no longer ate alone, but shared every mealtime with this Puritan.

While I was reading, I was continually struck by how every page, every paragraph, and every sentence was full of biblical citations, cross references, and illustrations. Watson used Scripture to teach Scripture, and many of his illustrations were drawn from the Bible. It was clear from his writing that this man was a walking Bible.

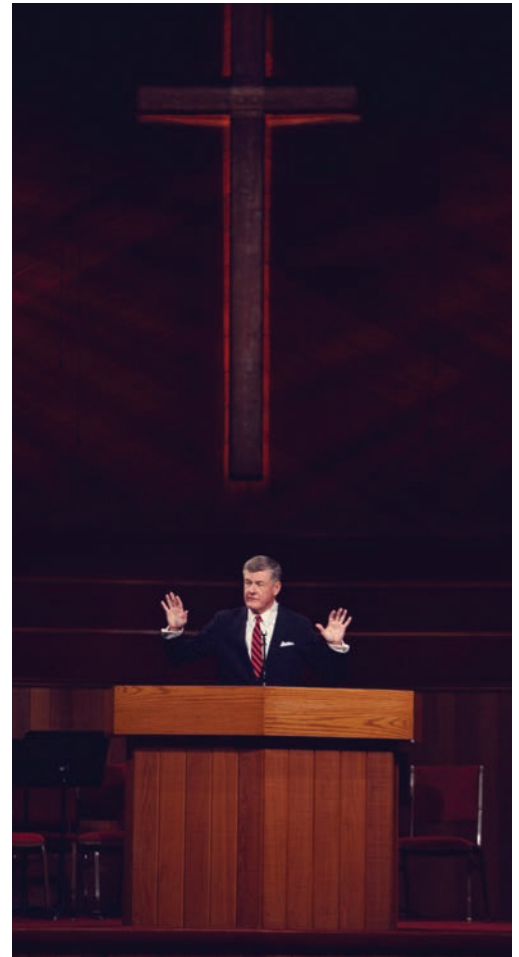
Several other features caught my attention. I was captured by how well structured each chapter was. There was no rambling, no chasing rabbits, no wasted words. Watson's argument was linear, not circular—logical, sequential, convincing, persuasive.

Moreover, the truth being taught was high theology. Unknown to me at the time, this Puritan book was articulating a distinctively Reformed view of the towering, transcendent nature of God. There were entire chapters on individual attributes of God. A whole chapter on the providence of God. A riveting section on the doctrine of election. Never had I encountered a book like this. Every objection I raised was being refuted, not by Watson, but by God Himself.

It was not simply *what* this Puritan taught that mattered, but *how* he expressed it. The style of his writing was pithy, precise, and pungent. His figures of speech were captivating. What I had heard contemporary preachers take five minutes to say, Watson said in five sentences. His illustrations were timeless, often featuring nature—the sun, ocean, wind, and lightning. Consequently, his arguments were not confined to seventeenth-century culture. He did not require translation from one century to the next. Instead, he easily rose above the times in which he lived and spoke with a freshness and accessibility, as though he were still speaking afresh today.

By the time I had finished reading this book, my entire worldview had changed. I went from having a man-centered theology to a God-centered view of truth. My entire outlook on salvation was turned upside down. I was beginning to see the world as God sees it.

This issue of *Expositor* is a look at the Puritans. My hope is that you will share in my experience of coming to a fuller appreciation of all that these Christians have left us as part of our spiritual inheritance. Though often considered because of their impact on one specific moment in church history, the works and legacy of the Puritans still resonate today. May these articles open your eyes to see Christian life and preaching with a clearer, more correct vision, and may your pulpit ministry be taken to greater heights of precision and power as a result. ♦





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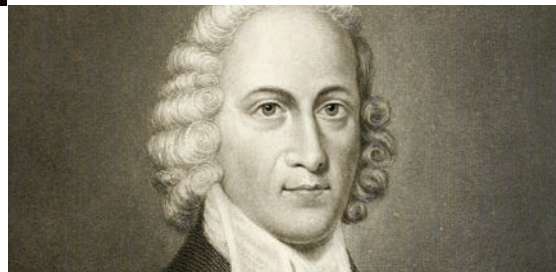


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**EXPOSITOR**

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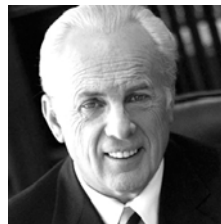
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T H E

*Puritans*

T H E I R

H I S T O R Y

&

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S T E V E N J . L A W S O N



Few generations ever assembled on the stage of human history have been more devoted to living for the glory of God than the Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. J. I. Packer has labeled them the titans of church history, “the California Redwoods in the forest of Christianity.” Because they were deeply rooted and grounded in the Scripture, J. C. Ryle has asserted that in power as preachers, expositors, and writers, “the Puritans in their day were second to none.” Martyn Lloyd-Jones boldly maintained that “all that is good in evangelicalism finds its roots in Puritanism.” With meticulous discipline, the Puritans took the robust theology of the Reformers and were resolved to live it out in every area of their Christian lives.

Strictly speaking, the Puritans were devout men and women within the Church of England who sought to purify its doctrine and worship. More broadly speaking, it can be argued that the Puritan spirit also animated those Nonconformists outside the national English church who embraced the same core beliefs and implemented them with the same fervor, and this brief history assumes something of that breadth and continuity. Such believers were first given the nickname “Puritan” in the early 1560s as a term of derision due to their efforts to conform the national church in England to the standard of Scripture—to purify it in faith and practice. Sound in doctrine and strong in their devotion, the Puritans distinguished themselves by their unwavering loyalty to the supreme authority of God’s Word. They insisted that the beliefs and practices of the Anglican Church must yield to the higher sovereignty of biblical truth. As they followed in the footsteps of the Reformers, the Puritans became the new champions of *sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone.

### John Knox: The First Puritan?

According to Martyn Lloyd-Jones, it is possible to mark the beginning of the Puritan era at the ministry of noted Reformer John Knox. In September 1552, this fiery Scot became a royal chaplain to King Edward VI and was charged with traveling throughout England to preach the Word and spread the Protestant faith. By this commission, he frequently preached before the king at such notable places as Windsor Castle, Hampton Court, St. James’s Palace, and Westminster Abbey. Lloyd-Jones

notes that this assignment positioned Knox “right in the center of affairs in England.” Knox used this strategic placement to challenge the prescribed public worship within the Church of England, which he believed retained elements of Catholic influence. Knox maintained that under the previous king, Henry VIII, the national church had not gone far enough in its separation from Rome.

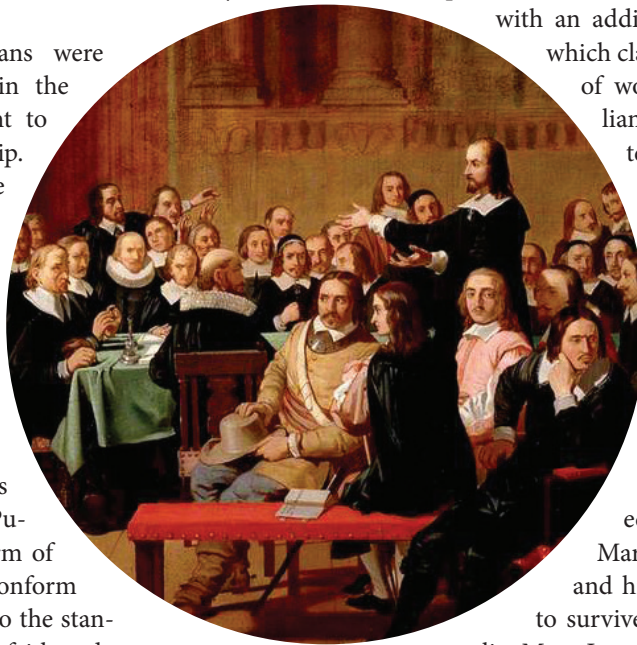
One typical area of concern had to do with kneeling at communion as prescribed in the edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* issued in 1549. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, insisted that when taking communion, one should kneel before the bread and wine. Knox vehemently denounced this practice as resembling Catholicism and failing “to conform to Christ.” This clash with Knox forced Cranmer

to produce a *Second Book of Common Prayer* (1552) with an addition known as the Black Rubric, which clarified that kneeling was not an act of worship toward the elements. William Blaikie writes that this bold attempt to purify the practices of the Church of England entitles Knox to be considered the “founder of Puritanism.”

### Reigns of Terror and Tolerance

Tragic to the initial Puritan cause was the early death of King Edward VI in 1553. This Protestant monarch died while yet a teenager. He was succeeded to the throne by his half-sister, Mary I, the only child of Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, to survive to adulthood. A staunch Catholic, Mary I sought to reverse the advances of her reform-minded predecessor. Known as “Bloody Mary,” she launched a reign of terror in which she burned at the stake some 288 believers with Puritan-like convictions. Under her intense persecution, many Protestants were driven out of England to find safety on the European continent. Numbers of exiles fled to Geneva, where they attended the English-speaking church pastored by John Knox. In this Swiss city of refuge, where John Calvin was teaching the Scripture-regulated simplicity of Reformed worship, these Protestant Englishmen learned a distinctly God-centered Christianity.

Mary I died in 1558 and was replaced by her half-sister, Elizabeth I. With a new queen on the throne, the Marian exiles returned to England and brought with them their hopes of continuing the changes that had begun under Edward VI. These Protestant pastors, theologians, and laymen attempted to bring the Church of England into further conformity to Scripture. They diligently sought a more comprehensive reformation



of church government and worship than had been previously implemented. In the early years of her reign, the English Puritan movement took a more visible form, though not completely so. Elizabeth I effectively established the Church of England as merely a compromise between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Her Acts of Uniformity from 1562 to 1569 left the church only “half reformed.” Though sympathetic to Protestants, she refused to drop all Rome-like practices of worship in the Church of England.

### King James I Crowned

During this time, Mary, Queen of Scots, abdicated the throne of Scotland after suffering multiple confrontations with Knox in Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh. Succeeding her to the throne was her infant son, James VI, who was crowned King of Scotland in 1567 when only thirteen months old. The royal ceremony occurred at Stirling, Scotland, where Knox preached the service. Four different regents governed Scotland until King James came of age and took full control of the Scottish government in 1583.

In 1603, Elizabeth I died childless, ending the Tudor dynasty over England and Ireland. Her senior advisor, Robert Cecil, made successful arrangements for James VI of Scotland—the great-great grandson of Henry VII—to succeed her to the throne. At age thirty-seven, James VI of Scotland became James I over Scotland, England, and Ireland, the first monarch to reign over all three realms. Upon his ascension, the Puritans believed that James I, raised as a Calvinist, would bring the cause of the Reformation to a fuller realization in England. In 1603, the Puritan leaders met with the new king at Hampton Court Palace to present their requests in *The Millenary Petition*. This document is said to have contained the signatures of one thousand Puritan ministers and called for yet further reform in the church. But they were soon disappointed.

### King James Bible

The advisors around James I counseled him to counter the teaching of the *Geneva Bible* with its marginal notes that—among other things considered objectionable—called for greater allegiance to God than to earthly kings. The solution was that James I launched his own Bible project, often called the *Authorized Version*—later known as the *King James Version*. Begun in 1604, the translation work was accomplished by forty-seven scholars, all members of the Church of England, and was completed in 1611. This new English translation was produced from the original languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek, and included the Apocrypha. The purpose was to replace the *Geneva Bible* with its Protestant study notes that were contradicting the teaching of the Church of England.

Seeking to expand his influence, James I attempted to impose the worship liturgy of the Church of England upon the Church of Scotland. The Five Articles of Perth were decreed in 1618, and required kneeling at the Lord’s Supper as it had been made compulsory in England. Further, the Articles mandated private communion for the sick, infant baptism not later than one Sabbath after birth, episcopal confirmation, and the

observance of holy days such as Christmas and Easter. These decrees were met with vigorous resistance by the Scots, who held strong views on these matters. Nevertheless, the Articles were reluctantly accepted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1618.

Many Puritans were growing restless in their efforts to reform the Church of England. A number chose to remove themselves from the national English church, and these Separatists journeyed to other lands in search of religious freedom. Among these were the Pilgrims, who first traveled to the Netherlands and then sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to America in 1620 to establish Plymouth Colony. Ten years later, in 1630, a larger group of thirteen thousand Puritans,



James I of England by Daniel Mytens, oil on canvas



Scottish Covenanters signed the Covenant and swore allegiance to God and religion over king, as depicted here in William Allan's 1838 painting, "The Signing of the National Covenant in Greyfriars Kirkyard, Edinburgh"

led by John Robinson, immigrated to New England. Here, for the first time, these displaced sojourners had freedom to build churches and worship God without government interference. It should be noted that many were not necessarily in favor of a more absolute toleration in all ways of life, but rather the freedom to worship God in accordance with their own conscience, which itself sometimes led to the persecution of others. A host of noted Puritan preachers migrated from England to the New World, including John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, and Thomas Shepard.

### Succeeded by Charles I

King James I died in 1625 and was succeeded by his second son, Charles I. This new monarch believed in the divine right of the king and immediately distanced himself from Parliament by levying taxes without its consent. He further angered the Puritans by marrying a devout Catholic, Henrietta Maria. In 1628, Charles I appointed a new Bishop of London, William Laud, who imposed stricter policies in the public worship of the Church of England. Laud was made Archbishop of Canterbury, presiding over the other bishops of the Church of England, in 1633. Believing the Calvinistic convictions of the Puritan movement to be a threat, Laud introduced more Catholic-like forms of worship to the national Church. He also tried to force this same liturgy and its Arminian theology upon the Church of Scotland.

When the new Anglican rituals were imposed upon the Scots, a market-trader named Jenny Geddes started a riot in St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh. While the head minister, James Hannay, was publicly reading the Anglican *Book of*

*Common Prayer*, she picked up a stool in the sanctuary and threw it at him. This defiant action provoked a public display of outrage against this imposition by Charles I upon the Scottish people. Strongly Calvinistic, the Church of Scotland refused to worship in the manner required by King Charles I.

### Scottish National Covenant

This Scottish resistance led to the signing of the National Covenant by a large gathering at Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh, on February 28, 1638. Copies of the document were sent out to the other cities of Scotland and were subsequently signed. Those who signed the National Covenant were known as Covenanters,

and they pledged to reject all human innovations in worship. This document asserted that the only head of the Church of Scotland was not the king of England but rather Jesus Christ. Moreover, this agreement rejected the "superstitions and papist rites" in the *Book of Common Prayer* and maintained that Covenanters would worship exclusively as Scripture teaches. The Scottish Parliament later subscribed to the Covenant in 1640, making it the law of the land.

King Charles I did not take this defiance lightly. In 1639, this determined monarch responded by marching to the Scottish border with twenty thousand soldiers to suppress this rebellion. The Covenanters raised an army of twelve thousand men to resist the king's threatening advance, resulting in the conflicts known as the Bishops' Wars. These military confrontations were so named because Charles I demanded an episcopal system of church government by which his archbishop would appoint bishops and they, in turn, would place ministers over the churches. However, Scotland affirmed a Presbyterian system of church government with local elders and presbyteries over the churches. In essence, the Bishops' Wars were fought over the right of the king to dictate the church government and public worship of the Church of Scotland. Fighting broke out in the streets of Edinburgh and other Scottish cities between the Covenanters and Scottish royalists. Meeting strong Scottish fighting, Charles I accepted their truce offer, though the settlement proved to be short lived. A second Bishops' War followed in 1640 in which the invading Scots army soundly defeated the English forces of Charles I. The king then agreed to pay the Scots' war expenses and not to impose his Anglican worship upon the Scottish church.

### Trouble for the King

On April 13, 1640, the impoverished monarch recalled Parliament in order to raise money to finance his losing military struggles in the Bishops' Wars. But rather than discuss imposing taxes to fund the king's failed quest for power, Parliament instead addressed their grievances with the Crown. In the face of their opposition, Charles I countered by dissolving Parliament with its many Puritan members on May 5, 1640. This governing body sat for only three weeks and was labeled the Short Parliament. On November 3, 1640, the king convened another Parliament for the purpose of paying his royal bills. This new Parliament sat from 1640 to 1648 and is known



The Westminster Assembly by John Rogers Herbert depicting a particularly controversial speech before the Assembly by Philip Nye

as the Long Parliament. They resolutely voted that they could not be dissolved except by their own determination. This emboldened stance provoked a prolonged warfare between the king and Parliament known as the English Civil Wars.

The English Civil Wars were a succession of extended conflicts concerning how the government of England and, therefore, the church would be run. When Parliament faced the threat of the Irish Catholic troops making an alliance to fight with Charles I, an agreement was reached between the English Parliament and the Scottish Covenanters in 1643 known as the Solemn League and Covenant. The Scottish Presbyterians promised their military support to Parliament against Ireland provided that the Scottish system of church government and worship would be adopted by Parliament. Under this forged alliance, the Scottish army captured Charles I in 1645, who, in turn, handed him over to the English Parliament.

### The Westminster Assembly Meets

Keeping the terms of the Solemn League and Covenant, the Long Parliament—which was strongly Puritan—called for a council of Reformed theologians and their own members to meet in London to write documents to reform the Church of England from the policies of Charles I and Archbishop Laud. The intended purpose was to establish unity among the national churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland in their beliefs, worship, and polity. From 1643 to 1649, over one hundred Puritan leaders met in the Westminster Assembly, comprised mostly of English Presbyterians, joined by Episcopalians, Congregationalists (sometimes called Independents or known as the “dissenting brethren”), Erastians, and Scots Commissioners. This group of “divines” wrote five important documents to guide the church in its doctrine, worship, and practice. These standards were the *Directory for Public Worship* (1644), *The Form of Presbyterian Church Government* (1645), *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), *The Larger Catechism* (1647), and *The Shorter Catechism* (1647). Each document was decidedly Calvinistic, and the form of church government was Presbyterian.

When these standards were completed, the Church of Scotland immediately approved them in 1647. The next year, these Reformed statements of faith were adopted by Congregationalists in New England. In 1658, the English Congregationalists subscribed to *The Savoy Declaration*, an adaptation of the *Westminster Confession* with only slight changes made regarding church government. Later, many Particular Baptist congregations adopted *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1677/1689*. This document deliberately demonstrated the common theological orthodoxy between these churches and the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, with particular adaptations made in such areas as church government and the ordinances. However, the *Westminster Confession* was never adopted in the Church of England.

During the Westminster Assembly, one of its Scottish members, Samuel Rutherford, wrote a landmark book, *Lex Rex*, in 1644. The title means “the Law the King,” or “the Law is King.” Rutherford advocated that rather than the king being the law, the law, instead, is king. This work defends the rule of law in the nation and the right to engage in pre-emptive and

defensive wars for the protection of innocent lives. This political treatise argued for limited government, constitutionalism, and restricted rights of the king. That same year, Parliament arrested Archbishop Laud, tried him for treason, and beheaded him on January 10, 1645.

### The Civil War Reignites

In February 1648, the Second English Civil War broke out between King Charles I and the Parliamentarians. Once again, this involved more military conflicts between these two warring factions. Oliver Cromwell, a staunch man of Puritan conviction, was empowered to marshal the military forces of his New Model Army to capture England for the Parliamentarians. These soldiers first defeated a Royalist uprising in south Wales and then marched to confront a pro-Royalist faction from Scotland that had invaded England. Cromwell won a decisive victory at the Battle of Preston on August 17–19, 1648, against a Scottish army twice his size. A strong believer in divine sovereignty, Cromwell was confident that God was with him to defeat those who opposed the causes of the Lord. This triumph concluded this second phase of the English Civil Wars.

In January 1649, Charles I was put on trial by the Rump Parliament, the remnant of the Long Parliament that had survived its purging by Colonel Thomas Pride. The king was found guilty of high treason as a “tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy” for prolonging the civil war. Charles I was publicly executed by decapitation in front of Whitehall London on January 30. The next day, John Owen preached before Parliament. Though he did not mention explicitly the sober event of the previous day, the sermon is entirely of the moment. This noted Puritan theologian called for national humiliation in the face of such political upheaval.

### The Commonwealth Established

Rather than crown a new king, Parliament abolished the

monarchy and declared the United Kingdom to be a Commonwealth. The Rump Parliament assumed executive and legislative powers, with Cromwell remaining as one of its members. The Royalist forces regrouped in Ireland and signed a treaty with the Irish Catholics to resist the English Parliament. In March 1649, the Rump Parliament chose Cromwell to lead a military campaign against the Irish that lasted nine months. In 1650, the Puritan leader was victorious against the opposition that supported a monarchy in Ireland. When pro-Royalist forces in Scotland proclaimed Charles II, the son

of Charles I, to be their king, Cromwell advanced north to invade Scotland, where at the Battle of Dunbar, his army killed four thousand Scottish soldiers, took ten thousand prisoners and captured Edinburgh. At the Battle of Worcester, on September 3, 1651, Cromwell’s forces defeated the last major Royalist army in Scotland. In light of these triumphs, Charles II, the previous heir to the throne, fled into exile in France.

Upon Cromwell’s return to England, he urged the Rump Parliament to set dates for new elections and to unite the three kingdoms—England, Scotland, and Ireland—under one governance. Cromwell became Chancellor of Oxford

University in 1651 and appointed Owen Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1652. Owen served for the next eight years and cast a strong Puritan influence over the institution. Cromwell, a Congregationalist, sought a broader, more tolerant national church that was sympathetic to Puritan ideals. He also demanded the Rump Parliament select a forty-member governing body from its members and the military officers. When Parliament refused, Cromwell swiftly dissolved them on April 20, 1653, saying “You have sat too long for any good you have been doing lately...Depart, I say; and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!”



Oliver Cromwell by Samuel Cooper, oil on canvas

### Cromwell, Lord Protector

In this political struggle, England realized it needed a strong, central leader. In 1653, an interim Parliament—the Barebones Parliament—made Cromwell Lord Protector over the Commonwealth. This gave him the power to call and dissolve Parliament with the support of the Council of State. As a Nonconformist, Cromwell sought to uphold the liberty of conscience in matters of worship and to promote personal godliness in the land. He encouraged Jews to come to England in order to hear the gospel and be converted. Their salvation, he believed, would hasten the return of Christ.

So effective was Cromwell as a leader that Parliament offered the crown to him in 1657. Puritan aspirations were at their zenith. When Cromwell sought counsel, several advisors, including the formidable Owen, urged him not to accept. Eventually, Cromwell declined the offer of the crown and continued as Lord Protector. Yet for all his leadership abilities, Cromwell could not establish a politically or religiously united and stable state. The many forces in the three kingdoms were too complex for such a solution. In 1658, Cromwell contracted malarial fever, and he died at age fifty-nine at Whitehall on September 3 of that same year. Though a controversial figure, he was buried at Westminster Abbey.

Cromwell was succeeded as Lord Protector by his son Richard, who lacked the decisive leadership abilities of his father. The English governor of Scotland, George Monck, sensed weakness and led an army to march on London, whereby Richard lost his office after only nine months. Monck restored the Long Parliament and made the necessary constitutional changes so that Charles II could return to England and rule in a restored monarchy. Cromwell's son fled abroad and lived in obscurity for the rest of his life. By this setback, the Puritan hope suffered a devastating blow.

### The Monarchy Restored

In 1660, the monarchy was restored, and Charles II was retrieved from France to be made king over the United Kingdom. After initial conciliatory overtures to the Puritans, he was pressured by Loyalists to restore a more Catholic-like worship conformed to the Church of England. With the support of Parliament, several laws were put in place that were aimed at reversing the Puritan advances. Foremost among this legislation was the Clarendon Code, a series of four acts of Parliament intended to enforce religious conformity within the Church of England. These acts were the Corporation Act, the Act of Uniformity, the Conventicle Act, and the Five Mile Act. Other penal acts would also be established at this time.

Anti-Puritan feelings were now running high. On January 30, 1661, Cromwell's body was exhumed from Westminster Abbey, and his disinterred body was hanged in chains and then thrown into a pit. His skull was severed and mounted on a pole outside Westminster Hall, publicly displayed for the

next twenty-four years. Many pastors and preachers of essentially Puritan convictions and sympathies, both within and without the national church, would be subjected to persecution and imprisonment, including such renowned figures as John Bunyan and Richard Baxter.

### The Sedition and Corporation Acts

First to be issued was the Sedition Act in 1661, which identified new acts of high treason against England. This legislation made seditious any attempt to deprive the king of his crown or to levy war against him. Further, it declared treasonous any incitement to a foreign army to invade England or other countries belonging to the king. Anyone who called the king a heretic or papist or who incited hatred against the king was regarded as treasonous and disqualified from all public office. This act also declared the Solemn League and Covenant to be null and void.

Another anti-Puritan piece of legislation known as the Corporation Act was also passed by Parliament in 1661. This act basically restricted public offices in England to those attached to the Church of England. No citizen could be elected to a civil or public office unless he had received the Lord's Supper in the Church of England within the last twelve months. Moreover, all public officials must reject the Solemn League and Covenant. This legislation was intentionally aimed at excluding Nonconformists from holding civil or military office in English society. In addition, this act excluded all Nonconformists from being awarded degrees from the two English universities, Cambridge and Oxford.

### The Act of Uniformity

The following year, in 1662, yet another law was enacted by Parliament that mandated public prayers, the sacraments, and other rites be made in strict conformity with the *Book of Common Prayer*. Adherence was necessary to hold public office or to be lawfully ordained into the ministry. Puritan ministers were required to abandon their previous ordination and be re-ordained under this new regulation. If Protestant ministers were to be re-ordained in the Church of England, they must swear allegiance to the stipulations of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Any minister who refused to conform to these regulations by August 24, 1662, would be ejected from the Church of England.

As a result of this and other strictures, over two thousand pastors—one-fifth of all the clergy—were expelled from their pulpits. Many men of Puritan stamp refused to take the oath, and as a result, on this dreadful day, a vast number of godly ministers were turned out of the national church. The date was chosen to deprive them of their livings in such a way as to maximize their hardships. This specific date was also St. Bartholomew's Day, the date in 1572 on which thousands of Huguenots had been massacred by the Catholic-led government

# BELIVERS REMAINED MOTIVATED BY THE SAME DESIRE FOR GLORY TO GOD THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO HIS REVEALED WILL, AND IT IS TO THIS SPIRIT THAT I REFER IN USING THE WORD "PURITAN."

of France; it became known among Dissenters—those who would and could not conform and so now labored outside the Church of England—as Black Bartholomew’s Day. Known as the Great Ejection, J. C. Ryle said that this event inflicted an “injury to the cause of true religion in England which will probably never be repaired.”

## **Conventicle and Five Mile Acts**

A subsequent act of Parliament, passed in 1664, was known as the Conventicle Act. This law banned any church not officially licensed by the Crown from conducting a “conventicle,” from a Latin word meaning “a little meeting place.” This restrictive act prohibited any religious assembly of more than five people who were not members of the same household. All religious assemblies outside the auspices of Church of England were strictly forbidden. The purpose was to suppress Puritans and their spiritual kin from gathering together for the preaching of the Word and worshipping God as their beliefs directed them. It should be noted that, from this point, most Puritans were outside the Church of England and so no longer Puritans in the strictest sense. However, such believers remained motivated by the same desire for glory to God through obedience to His revealed will, and it is to this spirit that I refer in using the word “Puritan.”

The following year, in 1665, another act known as the Five Mile Act was passed. This law forbade Nonconformist clergymen from coming within five miles of an incorporated town or city large enough to have representation in Parliament. This legislation also restricted Puritan ministers from coming

within five miles of the church from which they had been expelled. Moreover, Nonconformist ministers were forbidden from teaching in any school. In addition, Nonconformists were required to take an oath not to take arms against the king. Furthermore, they could not attempt to change the government or church polity. Consequently, many Nonconformists of the London area were forced to be buried outside the city limits as a sign of reproach. One such burial place was Bunhill Fields outside of London, where Dissenters of this and later years were buried—men such as John Bunyan, John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Isaac Watts, John Gill, and more.

## **Great Plague, Great Fire**

By the heavy hand of providence, two national disasters swiftly struck London with deadly force. The first to hit was the Great Plague of 1665–1666. This fatal pestilence brought the last major epidemic of the bubonic plague to England. The lethal disease killed an estimated one hundred thousand people, nearly one-fourth of London’s population. The infestation was spread by rats due to the dismal sanitation conditions. The cobbled stones of the city were covered with animal dung. Rubbish was thrown from the houses. Human and animal sewage was everywhere. Flies filled the air. The foul stench was suffocating London. The effects of the plague were pervasive.

Soon thereafter, a major fire, now known as the Great Fire of London, broke out. This blazing inferno swept through the central parts of the already ravaged city from September 2 to September 5, 1666. The fire started at a bakery and spread rapidly across the devastated city. A strong wind fanned the flames into a firestorm, leaving devastation in its path. Included in the destruction was the Royal Palace of Whitehall, where Charles II lived. The aristocratic district of Westminster was also ignited. Most of the suburban slums were consumed. In all, the Great Fire consumed 13,200 houses, 87 parish churches, 44 halls, the Royal Exchange, the Custom House, St. Paul’s Cathedral, and more. As many as two hundred thousand people were dispersed from their living quarters.

## **Second Conventicle and Test Acts**

In 1670, the Second Conventicle Act was passed by Parliament. The purpose was to further “prevent and suppress Seditious Conventicles.” This oppressive act was meant to restrict Nonconformist worship by imposing a fine on any person attending a religious assembly other than the Church of England. This constraining law was intended to coerce people to attend the services of the national church and hinder any underground Puritan movement. Further, any person who allowed his house to be used as a meetinghouse for a religious assembly would be fined. The Cavalier Parliament required all persons holding any public office to take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance to the Crown. Likewise, this act required all

public officials to take communion in the Church of England.

### The Killing Time

In 1680, Scotland entered another period of severe conflict between the Covenanter movement and Charles II, and later, James VII. Richard Cameron, the leader of the militant Covenanters, rode into Sanquhar, Scotland, and the Sanquhar Declaration was read in the public square. This announcement declared that the people of Scotland would no longer accept the authority of Charles II over them because he would not recognize their religion. The Declaration renounced all Scottish allegiance to the Stuart monarchy and opposed the royal succession of his Roman Catholic brother, James, to the throne. This reading was, in reality, a declaration of war by the Covenanters of Scotland against the throne of England. Cameron traveled throughout southwest Scotland, preaching before growing crowds.

Charles II attempted to stop this movement. A prolonged season of conflict followed, further setting the English forces of Charles II against the Scottish people. Thousands of Scottish Covenanters were persecuted and hundreds martyred by the English for holding fast to Cameron's ideas. On February 8, 1685, Charles II died at Whitehall Palace after suffering an epileptic fit. On his deathbed, he was received into the Catholic Church. This bloody season of warfare would continue under the next king, James II, until 1688.

### James II Crowned

Charles II was succeeded to the throne by his brother, James II, the second surviving son of Charles I. This new monarch was immediately suspected by the Puritan faithful as being like his father and brother, that is, as being pro-French, pro-Catholic, and believing in an absolute monarchy. James II continued in the footsteps of his brother in the relentless persecution of the Presbyterian Covenanters in Scotland. Moreover, he produced a son, who would be, doubtlessly, a Catholic heir to the British throne. A difficult future seemed inevitable for what remained of the Puritan remnant.

This sobering reality gripped the Protestants. They believed their only hope was to summon the son-in-law and nephew of James II, William of Orange in the Netherlands—married to Mary Stuart, the daughter of James II—to come to their defense. They urged William to lead an invasion of the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, and Ireland and secure it from a prolonged Catholic reign. William answered the plea for help by sailing across the North Sea and English Channel with a large Dutch fleet and army. He landed in southwest England at Torbay and asserted, "The liberties of England and the Protestant religion, I will maintain." After this successful intrusion into England, William sailed to Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he secured a great victory for Protestant cause.

This invasion of England became known as the Glorious



King James II by Sir Godfrey Kneller, oil on canvas

Revolution, or the Bloodless Revolution, because it was accomplished without military opposition. The defense of James II collapsed quickly due to his lack of resolve in resisting the aggressive advance of William of Orange. The defeated king fled England for the safety of France. James II was the last Roman Catholic monarch to reign over the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland. This triumph marked a conclusion to many long years of suffering for the English Nonconformists and Scottish Presbyterians. Many had lived in hope of it, but had not lived to see and enjoy it.

### The Act of Toleration

With William and Mary upon the throne, two committed Protestants were joint monarchs over the Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The enthronement of these co-sovereigns led to the passing of the Toleration Act by the Parliament of England in 1689. This law provided a new



measure of freedom of worship for Nonconformists in Great Britain. The Dissenters were now allowed to obtain licenses for their meeting places in order to gather for public worship. Moreover, they could lawfully have their own teachers and preachers, who would feed them Reformed instruction in the Word.

In some ways, the Act of Toleration marked the conclusion of what we might call the Puritan era. What had begun as an attempt to purify the doctrine and worship of the Church of England in the middle of the sixteenth century, giving rise to a movement or number of movements within and without the national church seeking freedom to worship according to the Word of God as it bound the conscience of his servants, was brought to conclusion with the passing of the Act of Toleration at the end of the seventeenth century. For Protestant Dissenters, this new legislation ushered in religious toleration not previously enjoyed. The Act of Toleration protected the Nonconformists from the force of the repressive legislation of previous monarchs, granting a much sought after measure of liberty to worship God according to conscience than those before them could have imagined. At the same time, we should not imagine that Dissenters were considered as equal citizens. The Act of Toleration did not remove the previous Acts from the statute books—it merely suspended many of their strictures.

The strength and force of Puritanism was now waning. Many of the influential leaders and key players of Puritanism and Nonconformity had died before the Act of Toleration was passed. Thomas Goodwin went to glory in 1680, John Owen in 1683, and John Bunyan in 1688. A new generation of pastors and believers was coming on to the scene and new battle lines were being drawn. The Adversary of men's souls attacked the church of Christ by other means—force having in many respects failed, spiritual fraud now crept in at many points. In the absence of persecution,

some seemed to lose their spiritual urgency and clarity. In the years to come, some drifted away from the truths for which the previous generations had been willing to shed blood, perhaps fearful of a return to those days or in other cases characterized by a very different spirit. At the same time, there were good and godly Christians who continued to stand firm as new challenges arose.

However, the prayers of the Puritans have not gone unanswered. Through successive generations, Christians around the globe have held the same principles, embraced the same precepts, and followed the same patterns. The Puritan influence can be traced in countless movements of faithfulness and fruitfulness, spurring on reformation, renewal, and revival in various groups and in different denominations. The recovery of a genuinely and spiritually Puritan doctrine and devotion has led to much blessing in many places. Even where the Puritan name and history is not known, the same spirit of obedience to God's Word in the face of persecutions and deceptions continues to animate faithful men and women in God's kingdom. In many instances, the Puritans and their immediate successors go on providing an example to encourage and stir those who hold the same basic convictions and who entertain the same desires.

The Puritans were not perfect. Neither were or are their successors. We do them no honor by pretending otherwise. They did not get everything right, nor were they the monolithic movement that we too often imagine. Nevertheless, their root concern for a careful, Spirit-empowered, whole-souled obedience flowing from ardent love to God in Christ provides an enduring model of biblical Christianity that we cannot afford to ignore. If that was the Puritan spirit, it remains one that we can and should cultivate, to the glory of God and for the good of the church. ♦

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*John  
Cwen*

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W O R D -

C E N T E R E D

P R E A C H E R

S I N C L A I R B . F E R G U S O N

**H**e towers above us. But at one time or another John Owen stood where most of us stand as preaching pastors, slogging along in the demanding routines of the ministry of the Word. He preached to children, to rural artisans, to soldiers, to students, to politicians, and to discerning Christians of the titled classes—as a pastor in a denomination, as an Independent, in small and large congregations, in house churches, as a military chaplain, as a college preacher, in underground churches occasionally raided, and as a church planter. He faced the same struggles and had the same goals we have. As David Clarkson reminded the Leadenhall Street Church on the Lord’s Day following Owen’s burial:

I need not tell you of this that knew him, and observed that it was his great design to promote holiness in the power, life, and exercise of it among you... He was a burning and a shining light, and you for a while rejoiced in his light.

We can almost always learn something valuable from reading or hearing another preacher reflecting on his work. Owen is no exception.

John Owen does not seem to have had a particularly high view of his own preaching gifts. But he did not confuse this with a low view of preaching. As biographer John Brown has noted, Owen recognized good preaching when he heard it, admired John Bunyan’s preaching, and invited him to minister to his own congregation in White’s Alley, Moorfields in London. He regarded preaching the Word as the central work of the ministry, and a task demanding the best of a minister’s powers.

Owen’s *Works* provide us with two access routes to his thinking about preaching:

**(i): Extant Sermons.** Some of his sermons were preached on national occasions, and then edited and published by request; a number of others were preached on prominent platforms (such as the Cripplegate Morning Exercises). But the majority of his extant sermons were preached in a local congregation. These were taken down in shorthand by his friend Sir John Hartopp and later transcribed in full.

A further source for the *substance* of his preaching is found in those published works which began life as sermons. Thus

he introduces *The Mortification of Sin*:

Having preached on the subject unto some comfortable success . . . I was pressed by sundry persons . . . thus to publish what I had delivered, with such additions and alterations as I should judge necessary.

**(ii): Reflections on preaching.** On occasion, Owen reflects on preaching in the context of a sermon, or within the larger context of a written work.

Here we must limit ourselves to a few reflections on (i) his understanding of the task and (ii) some of the characteristics of his own preaching.

### The Task and Its Prerequisites

Owen saw feeding the flock as the overarching responsibility of the preacher. As a result, he maintained that preaching should be Word-rooted but congregation oriented. Despite his love for study, he saw edification of his hearers, not simply exegesis of the text, as the end in view. The latter is the handmaiden of the former. The shepherd-preacher not only teaches but also nurtures his sheep. Like Christ, he is sensitive to their capacities (cf. John 16:4b, 12).

On the assumption that a man has gifts in the interpretation and public exposition of Scripture (without which there is no place for him in this calling), the chief demands are threefold: hard work, heart exercise, and love for the people. It would not be overstating it to say that Owen hated to see either laziness or lovelessness in preachers. With the Westminster Divines, he saw the shaping and application of biblical exposition to the needs of the flock as requiring great “pains.” For this reason not learning *per se*, but “*experience of the power of the truth*” is essential. Here Owen made a distinction between knowledge of truth and knowledge of its power so that it is “*an easier thing to bring our heads to preach than our hearts.*”

Real preaching, then, is experienced before it is actually communicated:

A man preacheth that sermon only well unto others which preacheth itself in his own soul. And he that doth not feed on and thrive in the digestion of the food which he provides for others will scarce make it savoury unto them; yea, he knows not but the food he hath provided



may be poison, unless he have really tasted of it himself. If the word do not dwell with power *in* us, it will not pass with power *from* us.

If preachers are to nourish the flock, they also need both knowledge of them and wise discernment to apply the Word to them. The preaching pastor needs to know when the sheep need milk (when they are young, or if they are sick) and when they can digest meat. Like Calvin, Owen does not place the food on the table without consideration of the appetite of the guests.

Owen realized that knowledge of the flock means spending time with them, getting to know them. This pastoral contact has a symbiotic relation to preaching. For, like others in the Puritan tradition, Owen operated with his own “preaching grid.” This was not a mere “check-list” but an awareness that his hearers would belong to several categories: the afflicted, the tempted, the distressed, the perplexed, the spiritually decaying and those who were making real spiritual advance. Indeed, the “whole flock in this world are a company of tempted ones,” he wrote. Yet, he also noted, each one is in a unique situation requiring the specific application of the Word. We therefore need what Christ had—“the tongue of those who are taught” so that we “know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.” Nothing is of greater importance in ministry, then, than that the preacher should have patience, meekness, and genuine concern for the flock. Here Paul’s inspired watch-word is *a propos*: “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, *with complete patience and instruction*” (2 Tim. 4:2, emphasis added).

Owen thus sees a difference between preaching that exists for its own sake (or for the preacher’s) and preaching that exists for the sake of the hearers:

Preaching sermons not designed for the advantage of them to whom they are preached . . . will make men weary of preaching . . . as much as make others weary in hearing of them.

What keeps a preacher going over the long haul, and his congregation on their tip-toes, is, then, the sense that more light

is always breaking on them from God’s Word, that it is alive and sharper than any sword, that it is food for their souls and medicine for their spiritual sicknesses.

Here, Owen gives place to the apostolic formula: “we will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4; in his discussion, Owen emphasizes the priority of prayer). We need to “give ourselves” to the ministry of the Word in study and preparation because we cannot expound to others truth by which we are personally unmoved. But in this context we also need to “give ourselves” to prayer. Of ourselves, we can accomplish nothing. As challenging as preparation is, the most challenging element does not lie in what we can do (study, exegete, shape sermons), but in the felt recognition that we can do nothing and therefore our preaching

needs to be saturated in prayer. It is within this matrix that unction is conceived—which Owen regards as necessary for fruitful ministry.

Not all contemporary Reformed ministers are enamored of “unction.” But John Owen was in no doubt that fruitful preaching is dependent on it. “Authority . . . proceeds from unction” he stated. It cannot be reduced to men’s gifts, or to exegetical skills alone. If Jesus received an “unction” that was “without limit” in order to preach, something of the same order, albeit in sovereignly differing measures, is required in our preaching, too.

This raises the question: is there a kind of preaching that God seems to favor with such unction? And, in turn, this leads to our second main consideration.

## IF PREACHERS ARE TO NOURISH THE FLOCK, THEY ALSO NEED BOTH KNOWLEDGE OF THEM AND WISE DISCERNMENT TO APPLY THE WORD TO THEM.

### Owen’s Preaching and Its Characteristics

Owen’s preaching belonged to the so-called “Plain Style” articulated in William Perkins’s *Art of Prophesying* and later recommended by the Westminster Divines “as being found by experience to be very much blessed of God...” The text itself would be summarized, the “main point” highlighted, its teaching expounded in the light of the Scriptures, errors refuted if necessary (but never majored on!), applications made to the mind, heart, conscience, and will, and “how to” questions answered.

Granted that Owen exemplified this style of preaching, here we can limit ourselves to four impressive features of his ministry.

**(i): His preaching was Scripture-saturated because he was Bible-immersed.** Owen had a substantial personal library and was well read in biblical scholarship (as his commentary on Hebrews makes plain). But by and large his preaching reveals *homo unius libri*, a man of one book, who has examined, and been examined by, the Word and has meditated long and deeply on its meaning and application. He is not merely re-arranging others' insights or imitating his favorite preaching guru (he *admired* John Bunyan but he did not attempt to *become* him). His preaching does us good because he knows the Word (and therefore himself) so intimately.

This—Scripture shaping Owen's preaching—meant that while people did not flock to hear him (at times his congregation numbered only in the dozens), no matter. The food he prepared would be the same, the preparation no different, the personal feeding on Scripture no less, because for him to be a faithful preacher was not a matter of numbers but of Scripture-saturated God-centeredness. Hence—

**(ii): Owen's preaching was profoundly oriented to the Trinity and centered on the revelation of God in Christ.** Until relatively recently, serious Christology and even more so serious Trinitarian theology have tended to receive short shrift in evangelical life and literature—despite the fact that they form the presupposition of all Christian experience. But we will never grasp why, for example, Owen's *Indwelling Sin in Believers* and *The Mortification of Sin* have such power (or why they make much contemporary "spiritual" writing seem flimsily therapeutic if not narcissistic by comparison) unless we sense that underneath lies Owen's sense of the sheer God-ness of the God of the Bible and that his focus is on the glory of Christ.

**(iii): Developing this point further, the real key to the depth of Owen's analysis of the human heart lies in his sense of who God is.** Owen unlocks us using the same key Calvin brings out of his pocket in the opening sentence of his

*Institutes*: true knowledge of ourselves is correlative with the knowledge of God. Owen's preaching uncovers the heart and undoes us because it exposes us to the excruciatingly pure beauty of God's holy love and seeks to hold us there until we begin to see the ugliness of our sinful putrefaction come to the surface to be cleansed.

Alas, we contemporary Christians—preachers and hearers—do not linger long enough to see much beyond the surface. The privilege enjoyed by Owen's congregation—of having two or three counselling sessions a week from the Word preached in the power of The Counselor—is far beyond the experience of almost all contemporary church life. And we tend to despise what we ourselves have never experienced. But if we imagine that we "get more" from Bible study groups, or from counselling sessions (whatever their place may be), than from the preaching of the Word, it simply indicates we have never experienced the Owenian style of ministry. Perhaps we who belong to the guild of preachers have only ourselves to blame.

**(iv): Owen's vision for and practice of the ministry of the Word extended to two areas often neglected in contemporary church life.**

(a) The first is illustrated by a series of brief addresses which fall into the category of "cases of conscience." We cannot delay here to discuss them in detail. Suffice it to

notice that Owen made room in the life of the church for supplementary occasions when he would open up both Scripture and his heart burdens for his people. In view was not only their instruction but encouragement for them to think through the application of biblical teaching and discuss it together. On these occasions, he may have spoken for twenty minutes or half an hour. What followed? Presumably questions, discussion, and, surely, seasons of prayer.

(b) In addition, we have access to a selection of Owen's sermons at the Lord's Supper. They are not Lord's Day sermons but briefer midweek expositions (by an Owenian measure!)



of the significance of the Supper. In addition to allowing *more time* for the regular enjoyment of the Supper (would that we followed this example!), Owen teaches us an important lesson. He gave himself to helping his people understand the significance of the Supper as an expression of the riches of Christ present and available to us in the preaching of the Word. This goes hand in glove with his emphasis on the presence of Christ as the *sine qua non* of edification.

For Owen it is here—the presence of Christ—that the focus of our prayer for preaching is found. This is so because the preaching-pastor is to—

*be ready, willing, and able, to comfort, relieve, and refresh, those that are tempted, tossed, wearied with fears and grounds of disconsolation, in times of trial and desertion.*

As we have seen, Owen was impressed by the description of Christ as the One whose God-instructed tongue enabled Him to instruct the weary (see Isa. 50:4). He continues to do this through the ministry of the Word. Therefore, only when the preaching of the Word of Christ brings the sense of the presence of Christ can there be a satisfactory answer to the question to which Owen returns more than once: “Who is sufficient for these things?” His answer is not “nobody” but

“in the sight of God we speak *in Christ*” (see 2 Cor. 2:16–17). In preaching a present Christ, preachers also become “the aroma of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15). For He Himself is present in His all-sufficiency when His Word is preached. And if this is so, and sensed, none need leave empty, for all may find in Christ the sufficiency for their own insufficiency, temptation, discouragement or sin. Thus—

*The presence of Christ* in all our assemblies . . . is that whereon depends all the efficacy of the ordinances of the gospel.

It is therefore so high a calling to be a preacher that Owen says:

Those who take upon themselves to be pastors, and neglect the work of feeding the flock, may at as cheap a rate, and with equal modesty, renounce Jesus Christ.

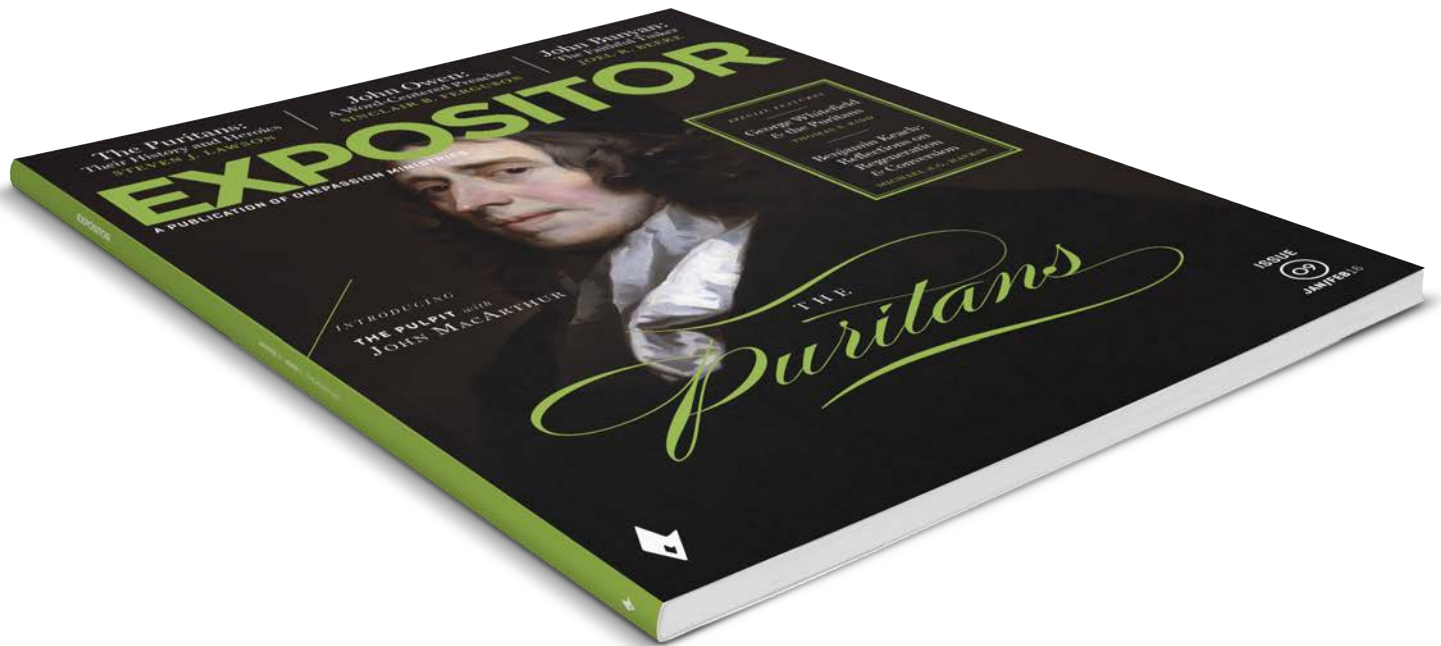
The stakes are that high. Owen helps us to realize this. He stimulates and stretches us to do better than we have ever done before. If this is the case, then the legacy of his preaching of the Word still available to us—in 2016, the quatercentenary of his birth—will not be in vain. ♦



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*John  
Bunyan*

THE  
FAITHFUL  
TINKER

JOEL R. BEEKE



**J**ohn Bunyan (1628–1688) hardly seemed fit for preaching. He was a coarse person with little education and a mouth full of foul language. He had lost his mother and sister to death and was exposed to the evils of military service before his seventeenth birthday. As a young man, he worked with his hands as a tinker or worker in soft metals. His soul was probably much like his body after carrying his sixty-pound portable anvil: outwardly tough and calloused, though inwardly bruised and burdened. Marriage to a church-going woman brought some moral improvement and produced much self-righteousness, but it was not until Bunyan overheard a few poor women talking about the new birth and the grace of God in Christ for sinners that he realized his greatest need.

The faithful pastor of those women, John Gifford, taught Bunyan about the grace of God. Bunyan read Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians and learned how Jesus Christ made satisfaction to divine justice for our sins by His death. Bunyan was transformed, and others soon called upon him to speak in meetings for evangelism and exhortation. Feeling very unworthy, he nevertheless was able to speak from his experience of the truth of God's Word. He said, "I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel, even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment." He was not a fire-and-brimstone preacher who looked down on unbelievers, but one who lived with a "fire in mine own conscience."

After two years, the Lord brought Bunyan to a stronger faith in Christ when He powerfully revealed Christ's righteousness to Bunyan's soul one day while he was walking through a field. Bunyan later wrote of this experience: "Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed, I was loosed from my afflictions and irons, my temptations also fled away. . . . Now I went also home rejoicing for the grace and love of God. . . . I lived, for some time, very sweetly at peace with God through Christ. O I thought Christ! Christ! There was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes."

Bunyan's preaching changed substantially. While still attacking self-righteousness, Bunyan dwelt more upon Jesus Christ. Sin and Christ as the Savior of sinners became the major themes of his preaching. Through it all, Bunyan said, "I preached what I saw and felt." His pastor John Burton (John Gifford had died) commended Bunyan as a man "not chosen out of an earthly,

but out of the heavenly university, the church of Christ," who "has not the learning or wisdom of man, yet, through grace, . . . has received the teaching of God." Already the church had recognized Bunyan's sound doctrine, holy life, and giftedness in preaching.

Bunyan's preaching soon provoked opposition. He was indicted around 1658 for the offense of preaching in a village near his hometown of Bedford without a license from church authorities. A Cambridge scholar publicly attacked him the next year for preaching as a mere tinker and not a university-trained man. This prompted a fellow Baptist to say in Bunyan's defense, "You seem angry with the tinker because he strives to mend souls as well as kettles and pans." He pointed out that Bunyan did not preach on his own initiative but at

the call of the church in Bedford. Bunyan was the target of rumors that he was a witch, a robber, and had two wives at once. However, Bunyan went on preaching, calling sinners to flee to Christ, and traveling to the spiritually darkest parts of the country to proclaim the gospel.

When we read Bunyan's treatises, we can almost hear the tinker's voice as he preached in the villages of Bedfordshire. We sense his earnest desire that his hearers may be granted spiritual senses to see, hear, and taste invisible spiritual realities. He cried out, "O that they who have heard me speak this day did but see as I do what sin, death, hell, and the curse of God is; and also what the grace, and love, and mercy of God is, through Jesus Christ."

His preaching drew his listeners into the divine drama of salvation. He addressed people directly, graphically, and simply in common language. He answered their objections, and pressed them to respond. For example, Bunyan depicted the following dialogue on the day of Pentecost:

*Peter:* Repent, every one of you; be baptized, every one of you, in his name, for the remission of sins, and you shall, every one of you, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

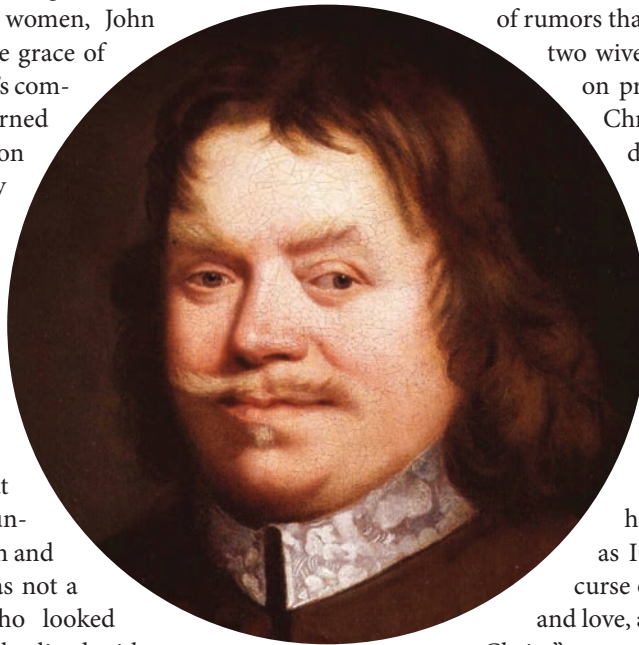
*Objector:* But I was one of them that plotted to take away his life. May I be saved by him?

*Peter:* Every one of you.

*Objector:* But I was one of them that bore false witness against him. Is there grace for me?

*Peter:* For every one of you. . . .

*Objector:* But I was one of them that cried out, Crucify him, crucify him; and desired that Barabbas, the murderer, might



live, rather than him. What will become of me, think you?

*Peter:* I am to preach repentance and remission of sins to every one of you.

*Objector:* But I railed on him, I reviled him, I hated him, I rejoiced to see him mocked at by others. Can there be hope for me?

*Peter:* There is, for every one of you. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Bunyan passionately urged his listeners to respond with faith in the warning of judgment to come as well the promise of forgiveness and life, by the grace of God. He said, “Poor sinner, awake; eternity is coming. God and his Son, they are both coming to judge the world; awake, art thou yet asleep, poor sinner? Let me set the trumpet to thine ear once again! The heavens will be shortly on a burning flame; the earth, and the works thereof, shall be burned up, and then wicked men shall go into perdition; dost thou hear this, sinner?”

Bunyan pleaded with people to flee from God’s wrath. “The soul that is lost will never be found again, never be recovered again, never be redeemed again. Its banishment from God is everlasting; the fire in which it burns, and by which it must be tormented, is a fire that is everlasting fire, everlasting burning. That is fearful.” He continued, “Now tell [count] the stars, now tell the drops of water, now tell the blades of grass that are spread upon the face of all the earth, if thou canst; and yet sooner mayest thou do this than count the thousands of millions of thousands of years that a damned soul shall lie in hell.”

While Bunyan pleaded with people to see the sinfulness of sin and the torments of hell, he also proclaimed the mercies of God. He urged, “Cast but up thine eyes a little higher, and

behold, there is the mercy-seat and throne of grace to which thou wouldest come, and by which thou must be saved.” He added, “Coming sinner, what promise thou findest in the word of Christ, strain it whither thou canst, so thou dost not corrupt it, and his blood and merits will answer all.”

Bunyan was particularly focused on moving his hearers to praise the Savior. He cried out,

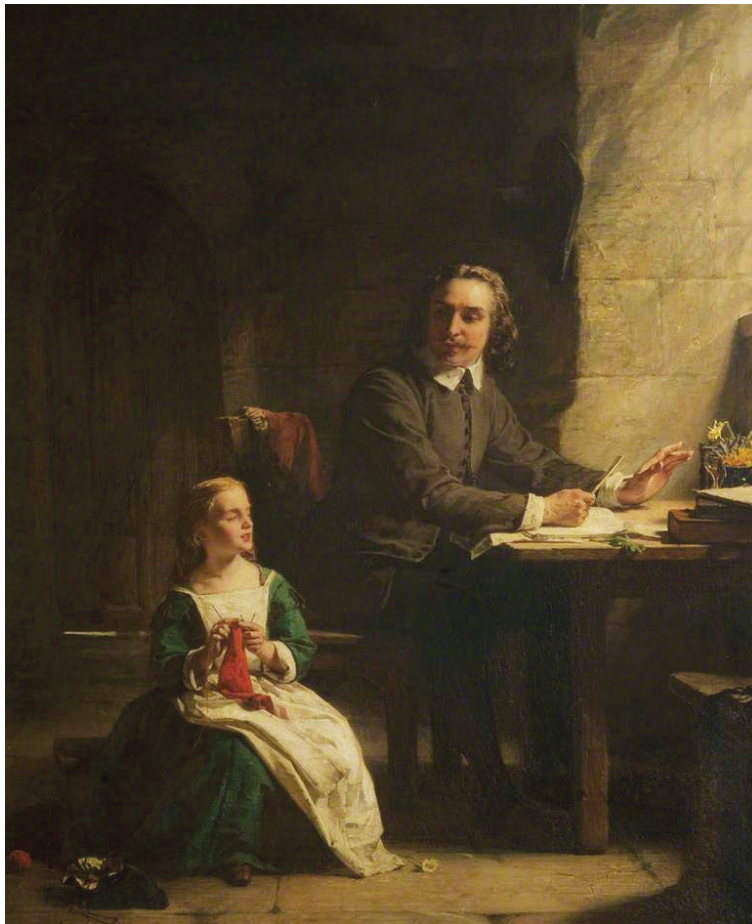
O Son of God! Grace was in all thy tears, grace came bubbling out of thy side with thy blood, grace came forth with every word of thy sweet mouth. Grace came out where the whip smote thee, where the thorns pricked thee, where the nails and spear pierced thee. O blessed Son of God! Here is grace indeed! Unsearchable riches of grace! Grace enough to make angels wonder, grace to make sinners happy, grace to astonish devils.

Bunyan’s preaching was not only doctrinal, dealing with the weighty matters of the faith; it was doxological, calling forth from awakened hearts the praise of their Redeemer. He said,

O grace! O amazing grace! To see a prince entreat a beggar to receive an alms would

be a strange sight; to see a king entreat a traitor to accept of mercy would be a stranger sight than that; but to see God entreat a sinner, to hear Christ say, “I stand at the door and knock,” with a heart full and a heaven full of grace to bestow upon him that opens, this is such a sight as dazzles the eyes of angels.

Though sometimes slandered as an antinomian, Bunyan promoted the pursuit of holiness and godly behavior. We are justified by faith in Christ alone, but we demonstrate the reality of that faith by our good works. Bunyan preached that



John Bunyan in Bedford Prison by Alexander Johnston, oil on canvas

a holy life is “the beauty of Christianity.” He called men and women to turn from sin “and let your minds and affections be yielded up to the conduct [guidance] of the word and Spirit of God.” He exhorted them to separate themselves from sinful occasions, sinful examples, and all enticements to sin. He warned, “A man cannot love God that loves not holiness; he loves not holiness that loves not God’s word; he loves not God’s word that doth not do it.”

Bunyan suffered for his preaching. In 1660, the authorities arrested Bunyan for non-conformity, failing to attend the services of the parish church, holding conventicles (illegal assemblies for worship), and preaching without a license from the Church of England. Bunyan was offered release if he promised to stop, but he refused, saying, “If I was out of prison today, I would preach the gospel again tomorrow, with the help of God.”

The shock of her husband’s arrest may have caused Elizabeth Bunyan to lose the baby she was carrying. Nevertheless, several months later she bravely stood before the court to plead for her husband’s release. The judges derided Bunyan and said that they would only release him if he promised not to preach. She replied, “He dares not leave preaching, as long as he can speak.” One judge was enraged and said Bunyan preached the teachings of the devil. Elizabeth boldly declared, “My Lord, when the righteous Judge shall appear, it will be known that his doctrine is not the doctrine of the devil.” One man later remarked that a queen could not have answered with more dignity than this simple Christian peasant woman.

Though Bunyan remained in prison for years, the jailers occasionally gave Bunyan freedom to leave for short times and preach. George Offer noted, “It is said that many of the Baptist congregations in Bedfordshire owe their origins to his midnight preaching.” He also preached to those with him in prison, though at times he himself was deeply discouraged.

After twelve years, Bunyan was finally released in 1672, when King Charles II issued the Royal Declaration of Indulgence. However, government officials quickly moved to restrict that freedom. Bunyan was imprisoned again from December 1676 until June 1677, when the Puritan theologian John Owen interceded with the Bishop of London for Bunyan’s release. Owen famously told King Charles II that he would gladly trade his vast learning for the tinker’s ability to touch men’s hearts.

Bunyan’s greatest book, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, written in that prison, contains poignant examples of his lofty ideals for the ministry of the Word. In the house of Interpreter, the pilgrim sees a portrait on the wall. It is a picture of the kind of minister God authorizes to be a spiritual guide to others, one who “had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon its lips, the world was behind his back; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head.”

## BUNYAN'S PREACHING WAS NOT ONLY DOCTRINAL, DEALING WITH THE WEIGHTY MATTERS OF THE FAITH; IT WAS DOXOLOGICAL, CALLING FORTH FROM AWAKENED HEARTS THE PRAISE OF THEIR REDEEMER.

In the Delectable Mountains, the pilgrims meet shepherds of the flock for whom Christ died, teachers whose names are Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere. They show the pilgrims the horrible consequences of doctrinal error, the dangers of spiritual blindness, the fearful reality of hell, and a glimpse of the glories of heaven.

In the second part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christian’s wife and children receive guidance from “Great-heart,” a valiant warrior well-equipped with sword, helmet, and shield. He teaches them of Christ, fights against a giant that assaults them in the way, and leads them safely past roaring lions—yet not of his own will or for his own glory, but as a servant of the Lord.

Bringing these images together, we see Bunyan’s vision of the godly pastor. He is a heavenly minded man, scorning the pride and pleasures of this world to live for treasures that last. He is a humble man, enduring trouble and sorrow to care for the lambs of the Lord. He is a holy man, knowing experientially the truths that he declares to others and fighting with all his heart against the powers of darkness. In all things, he is a preacher of the Word of God, a living trumpet that sounds the alarm to sinners and lovingly calls them to God.

Bunyan seized his freedom in 1677 as an opportunity for more preaching in Bedford, the villages around it, and in London. He had a plain style, which made him appealing to the common people, yet a power of eloquence that would shame the finest orator. He was an experiential preacher *par excellence*,

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proclaiming both what Christians should experience in their spiritual pilgrimage and what they actually do experience. He did not preach as from an ivory tower, but as one delivered from the depths of the dungeon, and as a result, by the Spirit's blessing, his preaching produced a great harvest.

Bunyan's preaching often drew large crowds. Three thousand people listened to him one Sunday, and one winter weekday, twelve hundred people gathered at 7:00 a.m. to hear him preach the Word of God. In the mid-1680s, persecution broke out again, and Bunyan narrowly escaped capture by agents of the government. Out on the road in 1688 seeking to make peace between members of a broken family, Bunyan was exposed to a storm, fell ill, and died. He was buried in Bunhill Fields, London, close to Thomas Goodwin and John Owen. Thus he died in faithful pastoral service to his Lord.

Though the church in America appears to be weakening as pulpits become platforms for story-telling and entertainment, the tinker from Bedford remains a remarkable monument to the mighty power of the Spirit. God uses the weak and foolish things of this world to shame the wise. Bunyan's college was a prison cell and his library was the Bible. Nevertheless, clad in the armor of Jesus Christ, he stood fast in the gospel and walked in the power of the Spirit. Through Bunyan's ministry, thousands of common people heard the Word of God preached in all its fullness, with clarity and passion.

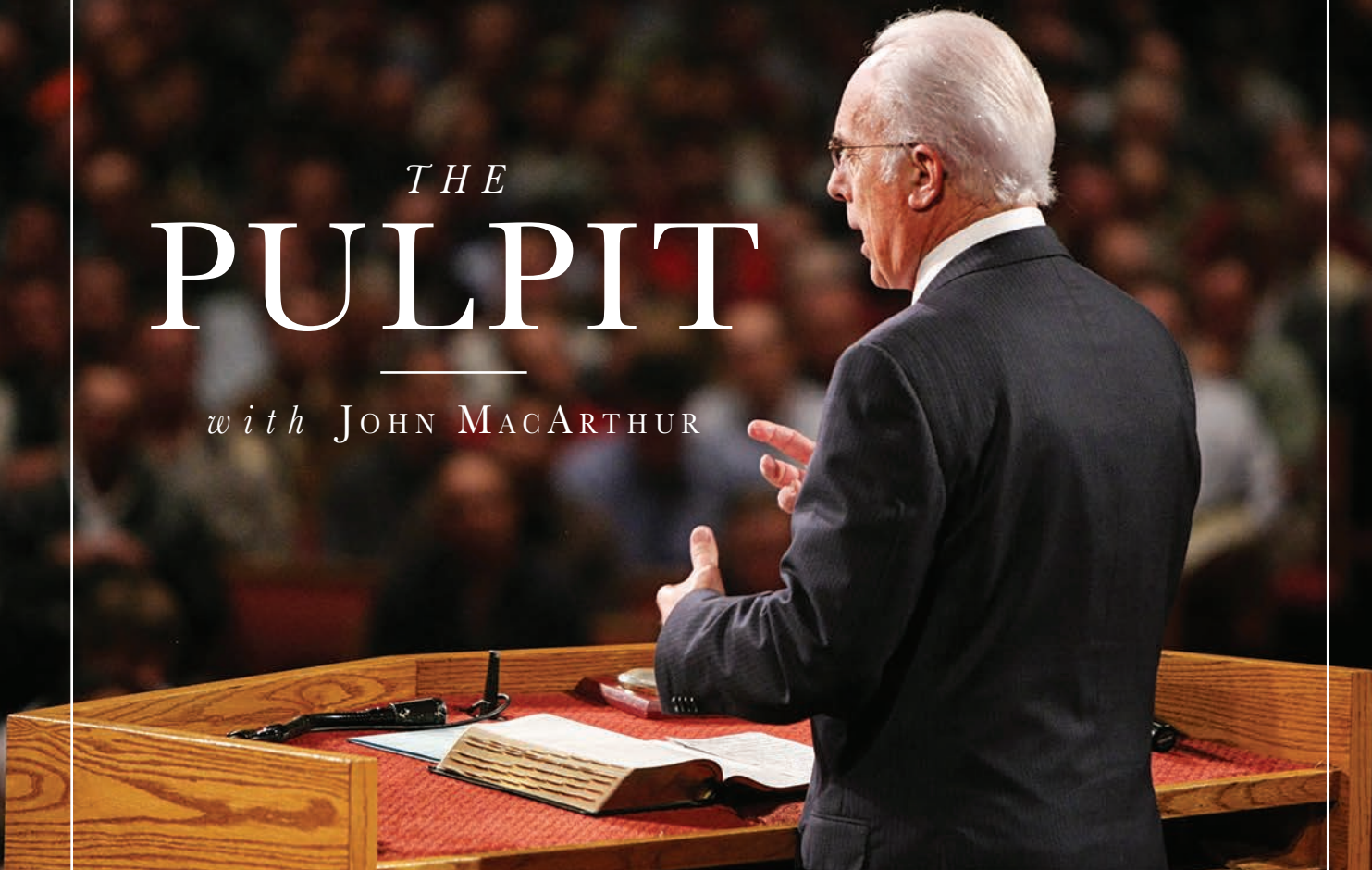
This same Spirit is still at work in the church of Jesus Christ today. Let us pray for God to give us more preachers like Bunyan so that Christ will be glorified in every village and city around the world. ♦



*The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, 1680

# THE PULPIT

with JOHN MACARTHUR



## A RECIPE *for* DISCERNMENT

.....

We cannot simply flow with the current of our age. We cannot elevate love while downplaying truth. We cannot promote unity by repressing sound doctrine. We cannot learn to be discerning by making an idol out of tolerance. By adopting those attitudes, the church has opened her gates to all of Satan's Trojan horses.

God gives us the truth of His Word, and He commands us to guard it and pass it on to the next generation. Frankly, the current generation is failing miserably in this task. Our failure to discern has all but erased the line between biblical Christianity and reckless faith. The church is filled with doctrinal chaos, confusion, and spiritual anarchy. Few seem to notice, because Christians have been conditioned by years of shallow teaching

to be broad minded, superficial, and noncritical. Unless there is a radical change in the way we view truth, the church will continue to wane in influence, become increasingly worldly, and move further and further into all sorts of error.

How can we cultivate discernment? What needs to happen if the church is going to reverse the trends and recover a biblical perspective?

### **Desire Wisdom**

Step one is desire. Proverbs 2:3–6 says, “Cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”

If we have no desire to be discerning, we won't be discerning. If we are driven by a yearning to be happy, healthy, affluent, prosperous, comfortable, and self-satisfied, we will never be discerning people. If our feelings determine what we believe, we cannot be discerning. If we subjugate our minds to some earthly ecclesiastical authority and blindly believe what we are told, we undermine discernment. Unless we are willing to examine all things carefully, we cannot hope to have any defense against reckless faith.

The desire for discernment is a desire born out of humility. This is a humility that acknowledges our own potential for self-deception (“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” [Jer 17:9]). This is a humility that distrusts personal feelings and casts scorn on self-sufficiency (“On my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses” [2 Cor 12:5]). This is a humility that turns to the Word of God as the final arbiter of all things (“... examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things [are] so” [Acts 17:11]).

No one has a monopoly on truth. I certainly do not. I don’t have reliable answers *within myself*. My heart is as susceptible to self-deception as anyone’s. My feelings are as undependable as everyone else’s. I am not immune to Satan’s deception. That is true for all of us. Our only defense against false doctrine is to be discerning, to distrust our own emotions, to hold our own senses suspect, to examine all things, to test every truth-claim with the yardstick of Scripture, and to handle the Word of God with great care.

The desire to be discerning therefore entails a high view of Scripture linked with an enthusiasm for understanding it correctly. God requires that very attitude (2 Tim 2:15)—so the heart that truly loves Him will naturally burn with a passion for discernment.

#### Pray for Discernment

Step two is prayer. Prayer, of course, naturally follows desire; prayer is the expression of the heart’s desire to God.

When Solomon became king after the death of David, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Ask what you wish me to give you” (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon could have requested anything. He could have asked for material riches, power, victory over his enemies, or whatever he liked. But Solomon asked for discernment: “Give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil” (1 Kings 3:9). Scripture says, “It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing” (1 Kings 3:10).

Moreover, the Lord told Solomon:

Because you have asked this thing and have not asked

for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days. (1 Kings 3:11–14)

## OUR ONLY DEFENSE AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINE IS TO BE DISCERNING, TO DISTRUST OUR OWN EMOTIONS, TO HOLD OUR OWN SENSES SUSPECT, TO EXAMINE ALL THINGS, TO TEST EVERY TRUTH-CLAIM WITH THE YARDSTICK OF SCRIPTURE, AND TO HANDLE THE WORD OF GOD WITH GREAT CARE.

Notice that God commended Solomon because his request was completely *unselfish*: “Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself.” Selfishness is incompatible with true discernment. People who desire to be discerning must be willing to step outside themselves.

Modern evangelicalism, enamored with psychology and self-esteem, has produced a generation of believers so self-absorbed that they *cannot* be discerning. People aren’t even interested in discernment. All of their interest in spiritual things is focused on self. They are interested only in getting their own felt needs met.

Solomon did not do that. Although he had an opportunity to ask for long life,

personal prosperity, and health and wealth, he bypassed all of that and asked for discernment instead. Therefore God also gave him riches, honor, and long life for as long as he walked in the ways of the Lord.

James 1:5 promises that God will grant the prayer for discernment generously: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

#### Obey the Truth

Someone will point out that with all his abundance of wisdom, Solomon was nevertheless a dismal failure at the end of his life (1 Kings 11:4–11). “His heart was not wholly devoted



to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been” (1 Kings 11:4). Scripture records this sad assessment of the wisest man who ever lived:

King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods. . . . For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the Lord. (1 Kings 11:1–9)

But Solomon did not suddenly fail at the end of his life. The seeds of his demise were sown at the very beginning. First Kings 3, the same chapter that records Solomon’s request for discernment, also reveals that Solomon “formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt” (1 Kings 3:1). Verse three tells us, “Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.”

From the very beginning, Solomon’s obedience was deficient. Surely with all his wisdom he knew better, but he tolerated compromise and idolatry among the people of God

(1 Kings 3:2)—and even participated in some of the idolatry himself!

Knowing the truth without obedience is worthless. What good is it to know the truth if we fail to act accordingly? That is why James wrote, “Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22). Failure to obey is self-delusion; it is not true discernment, no matter how much intellectual knowledge we may possess. Solomon is biblical proof that even true discernment can give way to a destructive self-delusion. Disobedience inevitably undermines discernment. The only way to guard against that is to be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

### Follow Discerning Leaders

Another key ingredient in biblical discernment is this: Emulate those who demonstrate good discernment. *Do not* follow the leadership of people who are themselves “tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). Find and follow leaders who display an ability to discern, to analyze and refute error, to teach the Scriptures clearly and accurately. Read from authors who prove themselves careful handlers of divine truth. Listen to preachers who rightly divide the Word of Truth. Expose yourself to the teaching of people who think critically, analytically, and carefully. Learn from people who understand where error has attacked the church historically. Place yourself under the tutelage of those who serve as watchmen of the church.

I do this myself. There are certain authors who have demonstrated skill in handling the Word and whose judgment I have come to trust. When I encounter a difficult issue—whether it is a theological problem, an area of controversy, a new teaching I have never heard before, or something else—I turn to these authors first to see what they have to say. I wouldn’t seek help from an unreliable source or a marginal theologian. I want to know what those who are skilled in exposing error and gifted in presenting truth have to say.

There have been outstanding men of discernment in virtually every era of church history. Their writings remain as

an invaluable resource for anyone who wishes to cultivate discernment. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and J. Gresham Machen are just two of many from the last hundred years who have distinguished themselves in the battle for truth. Charles Spurgeon, Charles Hodge, and scores of other writers from the nineteenth century have left a rich legacy of written material to help us discern between truth and error. In the century before that, Thomas Boston, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield battled for truth, as did many others like them. The preceding era was the Puritan age—the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which gave us what is undoubtedly the richest catalog of resources for discernment. And before that, the Reformers fought valiantly for the truth of God’s Word against the traditions of men.

Virtually every era before the Reformation also had godly men of discernment who stood against error and defended the truth of God’s Word. Augustine, for example, preceded John Calvin by more than a thousand years, but he fought exactly the same theological battles and proclaimed precisely the same doctrines. Calvin and the Reformers drew heavily on Augustine’s writings as they framed their own arguments

## DISCERNMENT ULTIMATELY DEPENDS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT. AS WE ARE FILLED WITH AND CONTROLLED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, HE MAKES US DISCERNING.

against error. In the year 325, a contemporary of Augustine, Athanasius, took a decisive stand against *Arianism*, the very same error that is perpetuated by modern-day Jehovah’s Witnesses. His writings stand today as the definitive response to that error.

Much of the written legacy these spiritual giants left behind is still available today. We can all learn from these men of discernment—and we would do well to emulate the clarity with which they spoke the truth against error.

Those who can expose and answer the errors of false teachers are set within the body of Christ to assist us all in thinking critically and clearly. Learn from them.

### Depend on the Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God is ultimately the true Discerner. It is His role to lead us into all truth (John 16:13). First Corinthians 2:11

says, “The thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.” Paul goes on to write:

We have received . . . the Spirit who is from God, so that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. (1 Cor 2:12–15)

Discernment ultimately depends on the Holy Spirit. As we are filled with and controlled by the Spirit of God, He makes us discerning.

### Study the Scriptures

It cannot be overemphasized: True discernment requires diligent study of the Scriptures. None of the other previously stated steps is sufficient apart from this. No one can be truly discerning apart from mastery of the Word of God. All the desire in the world cannot make you discerning if you don’t study Scripture. Prayer for discernment is not enough. Obedience alone will not suffice. Good role models won’t do it either. Even the Holy Spirit will not give you discernment *apart* from His Word. If you really want to be discerning, you must diligently study the Word of God.

God’s Word is where you will learn the principles for discernment. It is there you will learn the truth. Only there can you follow the path of maturity.

Discernment flourishes only in an environment of faithful Bible study and teaching. Note that in Acts 20, when Paul was leaving the Ephesian elders, he warned them about the deadly influences that would threaten them in his absence (Acts 20:28–31). He urged them to be on guard, on the alert. How? What safeguard could he leave to help protect them from Satan’s onslaughts? Only the Word of God: “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

Let’s look once more, closely, at 2 Timothy 2:15: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” Notice what this mandate to Timothy implies. First, it suggests that the discerning person must be able to distinguish between the Word of Truth and the “worldly and empty chatter” mentioned in verse 16. That may seem rather obvious. But it cannot be taken for granted. The task of separating God’s Word from human foolishness actually poses a formidable challenge for many today. One look at some of the



nonsense that proliferates in churches and Christian media will confirm that this is so. Or note the burgeoning stacks of “Christian” books touting weird views. We must shun such folly and devote ourselves to the Word of God. We have to be able to distinguish between the truth and error.

How? “Be diligent.” The call to be diligent evokes the image of a worker giving maximum effort in his or her work. The term describes someone driven by a commitment to excellence. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God.” The Greek phrase literally speaks of standing alongside God as a collaborator worthy of identifying with Him.

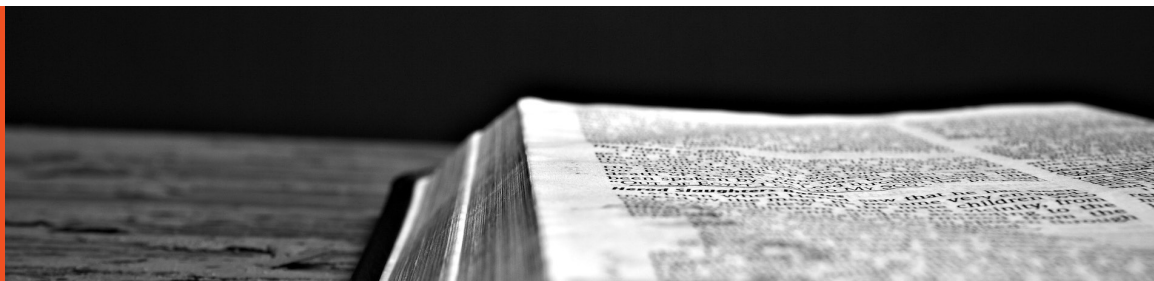
Furthermore, Paul says this approved workman “does not need to be ashamed.” The word “ashamed” is very important to Paul’s whole point. Any sloppy workman *should* be ashamed of low-quality work. But a servant of the Lord, han-

dling the Word of Truth carelessly, has infinitely more to be ashamed of.

What Paul suggests in this passage is that we will be ashamed before God Himself if we fail to handle the Word of Truth with discernment. If we can’t distinguish the truth from worldly and empty chatter, if we can’t identify and refute false teachers, or if we can’t handle God’s truth with skill and understanding, we *ought* to be ashamed.

And if we are to divide the Word of Truth rightly, then we must be very diligent about studying it. There is no shortcut. Only as we master the Word of God are we made “adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:17). That is the essence and goal of discernment. ♦

# E



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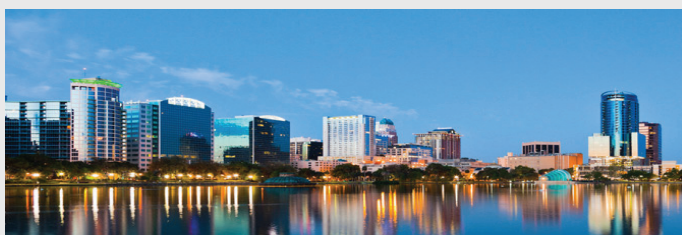
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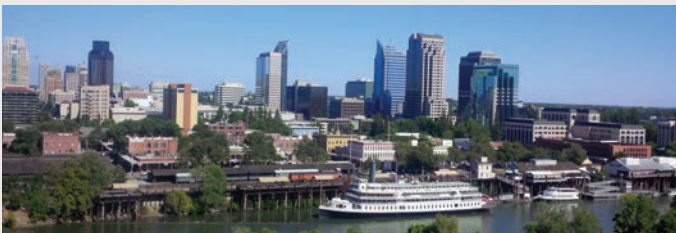


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*George  
Whitefield*

&

T H E

P U R I T A N S

T H O M A S S . K I D D

In the fall of 1740, the great English preacher George Whitefield arrived in New England for what would become arguably his most fruitful season of ministry. Whitefield had already set much of England and America on fire with his passionate preaching of the gospel of Christ. With rigorous attention to the Bible and his proclamation of the necessity of the new birth, he helped to bring thousands out of their spiritual doldrums. Many thousands more put their faith in Christ for the first time. By 1740, he had not only become the key preacher of the burgeoning Great Awakening, but had also become the most famous man in Britain and America.

Whitefield still longed to go to New England, however, because of its Puritan heritage. Whitefield had begun to dig into great texts of Puritan spirituality even before his conversion at the University of Oxford a half a decade earlier. The Church of England in which he was reared had memories of the leading Puritan Reformers, but that denomination had turned decisively against Puritanism some eighty years earlier. The end of the English Civil War, and the Restoration of King Charles II to the English monarchy, signaled difficult times for the Puritan movement in the 1660s. Like those English Puritans of earlier generations, Whitefield saw himself as a reformer within the Anglican Church. That church had never decisively embraced the theology or church structures recommended by the Reformation's promoters. To Whitefield, the Puritans of England and New England were pioneers in the cause he promoted, which entailed the preaching of the new birth of salvation and of the Calvinist doctrines of grace.

Everywhere Whitefield went, pressing crowds in the thousands came to hear him extol the mercies of Christ to sinners. Sometimes the numbers in attendance exceeded the population of the town he was visiting. Whitefield kept an eye out in New England for signs of the persistence of Puritan piety. He also registered evidence of how Massachusetts—founded by John Winthrop and other Puritan émigrés in 1630—and the other Puritan colonies had left their “first love.”

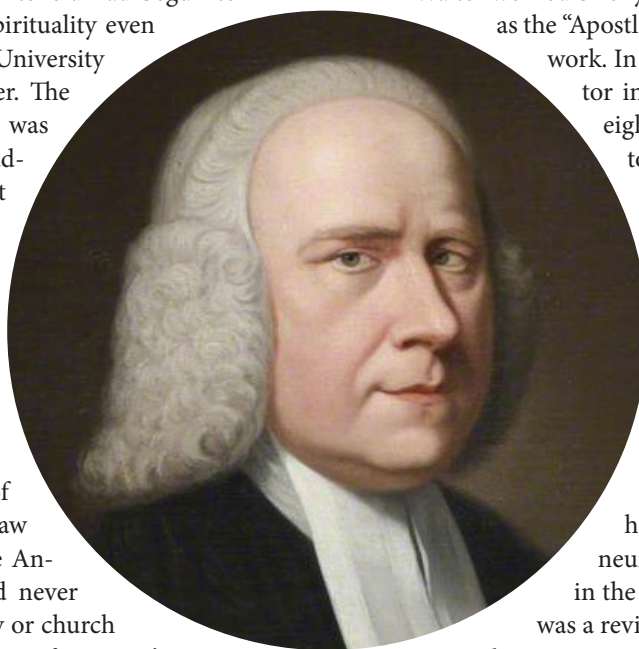
Whitefield arrived in New England at Newport, Rhode Island, in September 1740. Newport was then one of the largest towns in America. Whitefield was delighted to meet the Reverend Nathaniel Clap, a Congregationalist minister whom Whitefield reckoned was “the most venerable man I ever saw

in my life. He looked like a good old Puritan, and gave me an idea of what stamp those men were, who first settled New England.” The elderly Clap rejoiced to welcome this Anglican preacher and reformer, and “prayed most affectionately” for God to bless Whitefield’s work in New England.

Clap was not the only old Puritan minister in New England who received Whitefield with joy. Those who could remember the seventeenth-century heyday of Puritan reform caught a whiff of familiarity in Whitefield’s Christian ardency. Outside of Boston, Whitefield met Pastor Nehemiah Walter, who had been born to English parents in Ireland in the early 1660s, just as King Charles II was expelling many Puritan pastors from their Church of England pulpits. Walter’s family had come to Massachusetts when Nehemiah was a teenager. In the 1680s,

Walter worked briefly with the aging John Eliot, known as the “Apostle to the Indians” for his missionary work. In the 1710s, Walter became the pastor in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Almost eighty years old, Walter was thrilled to meet Whitefield, seeing him as a worthy successor to the Puritan forebears. Whitefield likewise called Walter a “good old Puritan.” Hearing Whitefield preach, Walter concluded that Whitefield’s work represented “*Puritanismus redivivus*”—Puritanism revived. Although Whitefield’s itinerant ministry and skillful use of media marked him as a great Christian entrepreneur, he was also leading a “revival” in the conservative sense of that word. It was a revival of the biblicist heart religion of the Puritans.

Whitefield surely grew up knowing a bit about Puritanism, as a child of the Anglican Church in Gloucester, England. But his conversion at the University of Oxford in 1735 was aided by key books on evangelical spirituality, many of them suggested to him by his new friends John and Charles Wesley. Three of these stood out to Whitefield. One was Richard Baxter’s *A Call to the Unconverted* (1658). Baxter was a prolific writer and Puritan pastor at Kidderminster in the mid-seventeenth century. For Whitefield and legions of other readers, Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted* helped to clarify the distinction between moral behavior and conversion into a born-again life. A person needed a transformed life, one that only God could precipitate. A truly converted person had a “new understanding, a new will, and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love, and delight; new thoughts, new speech, new company (if possible) and a new conversation,” Baxter explained. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ would make



all things new in the converted sinner.

Whitefield also read Joseph Alleine's classic *An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners*. Like Baxter, Alleine was a Puritan scholar and minister in the mid-seventeenth century, pastoring for less than a decade at Taunton, England, before losing his position in the "Great Ejection" of Puritan pastors in England in 1662. Alleine's oft-reprinted *Alarm* focused, like Baxter's *Call*, on the sharp distinction between the converted and unconverted. This emphasis was much needed, given the English parish model which tended to assume that those who were born in England, who received baptism as an infant, and who maintained some religious duties were on their way to heaven. The Puritans, on the other hand, interjected a stark separation between those who had experienced the transforming power of God's grace and those who remained lost in their sins.

Where Baxter had illuminated the divine qualities of the new-born life in Christ, Alleine highlighted the dangers of remaining passive before the threat of God's wrath. Sin was repulsive to God; the Lord found "nothing in a man to turn his heart, but to turn his stomach," Alleine warned. While some more liberal Anglicans wished to emphasize man's goodness, Alleine spoke of humanity's "swinish nature" and "putrid" souls. Alleine, a principled Calvinist, insisted that it was God's mercy alone that led Him to extend grace to those whom He chose. Whitefield would come not only to accept

these views of conversion, but also the Calvinist assessment of human nature, and of God's sovereign agency in salvation.

The book that probably made the most profound impact on Whitefield, aside from the Bible, was Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (1677). Scougal was a Scottish Episcopal minister and professor at the University of Aberdeen, whose influential career was cut short by his death of tuberculosis in 1678. As Whitefield was struggling to find acceptance with God, he initially had thought that more religious duties—such as fasting and praying—were the key to securing God's favor. No doubt he got this impression from his early exposure to the Wesleys' Methodism. Early Methodists focused more on the devout Christian life than the necessity of conversion. But Scougal's treatise explained to Whitefield that good works were only the fruit of a converted

soul, not the way to gain forgiveness from God. Many people were outwardly religious, but Scougal insisted that few really entered the "Divine Life" of forgiveness and union with Christ. Scougal wrecked Whitefield's moralistic pretensions. Whitefield recalled later that when he read *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, a "ray of divine light was instantaneously darted in upon my soul, and from that moment, but not until then, did I know that I must be a new creature." Had his years of religious duties all sprung from the wrong motive? He was so upset by the thought that he considered burning his copy of Scougal. But instead he stood up, the book in hand, and prayed audibly, "Lord, if I am not a Christian, if I am not a real one, God, for Jesus Christ's sake, show me what Christianity

is, that I may not be damned at last." God would answer his prayer, as Whitefield soon experienced a life-transforming conversion.

We could cite numerous other examples of Puritan writers—or Calvinist authors generally—who influenced Whitefield's ministry and theology. By the beginning of his work as a preacher, Whitefield had drunk deeply at the well of Puritan spirituality. Martyn Lloyd-Jones rightly contended that Whitefield "lived in the Puritans and their writings." The Puritan movement fell on hard times in England after the Great Ejection, and many like Whitefield viewed New England as having a deeper, more focused tradition of Puritan piety than England did. No wonder, then, that Whitefield came

to New England as both an itinerant and a curious observer in 1740. How did Reformed faith now fare in the place where Puritanism had seen its fullest flowering?

Although he appreciated certain ministers' commitment to the old Puritan way, Whitefield was disappointed with the spiritual drift he saw in Massachusetts and Connecticut, a century after their hopeful beginnings. A day after he met with the "good old Puritan" Nehemiah Walter, Whitefield visited Harvard College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Harvard had been founded for training Puritan pastors. It still did educate pastors, but the faculty's theology was sliding into fashionable, "rationalist" anti-Calvinism. Whitefield discerned that spiritual concerns were on the wane at the school, as the professors did not pray with students or ask about their standing before God. Of special concern to Whitefield, the stu-

## BY THE BEGINNING OF HIS WORK AS A PREACHER, WHITEFIELD HAD DRUNK DEEPLY AT THE WELL OF PURITAN SPIRITUALITY.



George Whitefield Preaching in Bolton, MA, June 1750 by Thomas Walley, 1863, oil on canvas. This painting depicts the historic moment when Whitefield preached one of his most moving sermons, close to Halliwell, Bolton in June 1750.

dents no longer read Puritan classics, but instead chased after contemporary authors such as the Anglican archbishop John Tillotson. (Whitefield claimed that Tillotson knew no more of true Christianity than did Islam's Prophet Muhammad.) He wished instead that they still read trustworthy "evangelical" writers such as Thomas Shepard, the Puritan minister at Cambridge who had come to New England in the 1630s. Whitefield also mentioned the value of Solomon Stoddard, Jonathan Edwards's grandfather and pastoral predecessor at Northampton, Massachusetts. Both Shepard and Stoddard had taught the necessity of true conversion, and were far better choices to feed the students' souls.

As Whitefield prepared to leave New England, he reflected on the state of these colonies at the outset of the Great Awakening. They had a deep spiritual legacy and a strong infrastructure that had once supported robust, biblical faith. The Puritan forefathers, notwithstanding some imperfections (Whitefield might have included their hostility toward Anglicans), were surely "a set of righteous men. They certainly followed our Lord's rule [and] sought first the Kingdom of God

and His righteousness." All other things, he reckoned, had been added to them, with stable, prosperous towns centered around their churches. Yet he saw signs of decay, not least in his belief that "many, nay most that preach, I fear do not experimentally know Christ." Still, he hoped that their rich heritage of faith would give New Englanders a strong basis upon which to build revival when it came. "When a spirit of reformation revives, it certainly will prevail more [there] than in any other place, because they are simple in their worship, less corrupt in their principles, and consequently easier to be brought over to the form of sound words, into which so many of their pious ancestors were delivered." Perhaps Whitefield's analysis helps explain why the areas in America and Britain with the deepest traditions in Reformed Christianity, including New England and the Scottish Lowlands, responded the most eagerly to Whitefield's preaching.

Whitefield's zest for the Puritans did not ebb as his career went on. This continuing admiration was best illustrated by his decision, a few years before his death in 1770, to write a recommendatory preface to a new edition of the works of John

Bunyan, the great Puritan, Baptist, and author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. "Through rich, free, sovereign, [and] distinguishing grace," God had turned Bunyan, a humble tinker (metalworker) and notorious sinner, into "a scribe ready instructed to the Kingdom of God," Whitefield wrote. *The Pilgrim's Progress* "smells of the prison" where Bunyan composed the classic work, Whitefield noted. Whitefield concluded from Bunyan's affecting quality that "ministers never write or preach so well as when under the cross: the Spirit of Christ and of glory then rests upon them." This cross-shadowed trait was what "made the Puritans of the last century such burning and shining lights," Whitefield deduced. Bunyan and other Puritans never spoke with so much authority as when they suffered expulsion, persecution, and imprisonment for the sake of Christ. "Though dead, by their writings they yet speak."

Whitefield said that he had become convinced over his three decades of public ministry that "the more true and vital religion hath revived . . . the more the good old Puritanical writings . . . have been called for." Whitefield took a broad denominational view of where the authors of these writings might be found, including Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and in Bunyan's case, even Baptist writers in the Puritan tradition. (The divide between the Baptists and paedobaptist denominations was quite sharp in Whitefield's

time.) All these Puritanical authors shared a "firm adherence to the principal and fundamental doctrines of Christianity." Others whom Whitefield commended on this point were the great Presbyterian Bible commentator Matthew Henry and the Congregationalist John Owen. Whitefield remained convinced of his interdenominational Reformed principles. Although he would not countenance spiritual union with theological liberals, or with Arminian anti-Calvinists, Whitefield regarded differences over ecclesiology as "non-essentials" that should not get in the way of unity among Reformed evangelical Christians.

In the Puritans, Whitefield found resources for spiritual nourishment, biblical guidance, and effective ministry. Even though he took the Anglo-American world by storm, he understood what he was doing in a generational framework. He was carrying on the legacy of the Puritans and other godly reformers throughout history. Recommending that inheritance, Whitefield hoped that the Puritans would continue to "beget, promote, and increase . . . real and undefiled religion in the hearts, lips, and lives of readers, of all ranks and denominations." Much of Whitefield's genius came from his ability to communicate that Reformed, Puritan tradition to a new generation, one that was much in need of revival. ♦

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*Benjamin  
Keach*

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# A

t the heart of the Reformation was one of the most fundamental questions of the Christian faith: How can I be saved from eternal damnation? The answer of all the leading Reformers was one and the same: only by God's free and sovereign grace. As J. I. Packer and O. Raymond Johnston have pointed out, it is wrong to suppose that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that storm center of the Reformation, was the crucial question in the minds of such theologians as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and John Calvin. This doctrine was important to the Reformers because it helped to express and to safeguard their answer to another, more vital, question, namely,

whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ's sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith.

For all these Reformers this was the crucial question: Was Christianity "a religion of utter reliance on God for Salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort"?

Loyal to the heritage of the Reformation, the Puritan authors in the last half of the seventeenth century were equally insistent on the vital importance of confessing that salvation is by sovereign, free grace alone. A good example of this loyalty is found in the work of Benjamin Keach (1640–1704), one of the most prolific Puritan authors and a Baptist by conviction. In a published history of religion in Britain, Michael Mullett has identified Benjamin Keach as the leading Baptist theologian of his era, similar in importance for his denomination as Richard Baxter (1615–91) was for the English Presbyterians and John Owen (1616–83) for the Congregationalists. He argued against the Quakers, those seventeenth-century counterparts of modern-day charismatics; he wrote allegories, now long forgotten, that in his day rivaled those of John Bunyan (1628–88) in popularity and sales; he was a pioneer in the congregational singing of hymns in a day when singing was limited to the Psalter; and he published a number of lengthy collections of sermons, including *A Golden Mine*

*Opened* (1694) and *Gospel Mysteries Unveiled* (1701), which remain invaluable, though largely unused, treasures for the study of seventeenth-century Baptist thought.

### Early Years

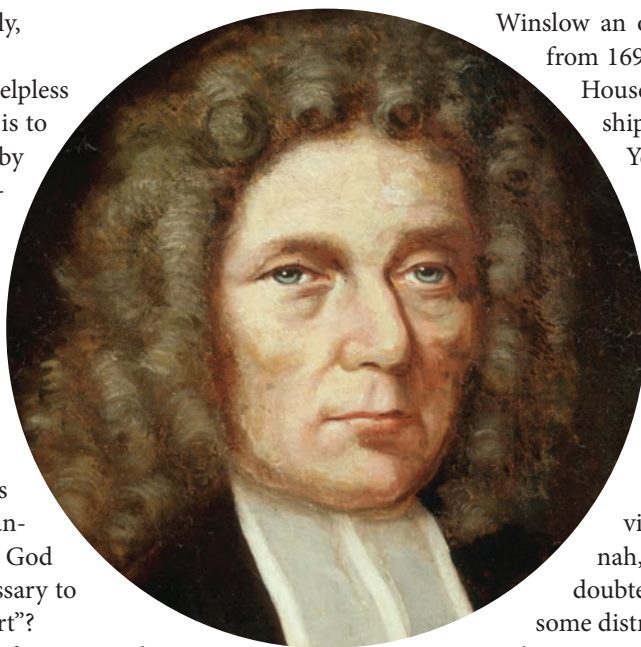
Keach was born on February 29, 1640, to John and Fodora Keach, an Anglican couple residing at the time in Stoke Hammond, North Buckinghamshire. Raised an Anglican, he joined the group known to history as the General Baptists when he was fifteen. The General Baptists were Arminian in theology and had emerged from the womb of Puritanism in the second decade of the seventeenth century. Within three years of his baptism as a believer, he was called to preach by the General Baptist congregation that met in Winslow, not far from Stoke Hammond. There is still in existence in

Winslow an old Baptist meeting house dating from 1695 which is called Keach's Meeting House. Whether or not Keach ever worshipped in this chapel is not known. Yet, it is an appropriate way to recall the connection of this great Puritan leader with this area of Buckinghamshire.

Around the same time as his call to the ministry of the Word, Keach married Jane Grove (d. 1670), a native of Winslow. During the ten or so years of their marriage the couple had five children, of whom three survived infancy. One of them, Hannah, later became a Quaker, which undoubtedly would have caused her father some distress.

The 1660s to the 1680s was a time of great persecution for any who sought to worship outside the Church of England, and Keach found himself in trouble with the state on more than one occasion. For instance, in 1664 Keach was arrested on a charge of being "a seditious, heretical and schismatical person, evilly and maliciously disposed and disaffected to his Majesty's government and the government of the Church of England." It appears that a children's primer which Keach had written containing reading lessons, simple instruction in punctuation and arithmetic, and lists of words of one, two, or three syllables had been read by the Anglican rector of Stoke Hammond, Thomas Disney, and reported to the government authorities as not only unfit for children, but positively seditious.

No copies of this primer exist today. At the time of his trial, all copies of it were destroyed, though we are told Keach rewrote it later from memory and published it as *The Child's Delight: Or Instructions for Children and Youth*. The original



primer was deemed heretical, especially because of references to believers baptism and Keach's interpretation of the book of Revelation.

Put on trial on October 8, 1664, Keach was found guilty, imprisoned for two weeks and fined twenty pounds, a considerable amount in those days for a poor Puritan preacher. In addition to these punishments, Keach had to stand for two periods of two hours each in the pillory, a wooden framework that had holes for the head and hands of the persons being punished. Generally the pillory would be placed in the town or village square, where the offender could also be subjected to various forms of public ridicule. On this occasion, however, Keach took the opportunity to preach to the crowd that gathered around. "Good People," he began during his first time in the pillory,

I am not ashamed to stand here this day, . . . My Lord Jesus was not ashamed to suffer on the cross for me; and it is for His cause that I am made a gazing-stock. Take notice, it is not for any wickedness that I stand here; but for writing and publishing His truths, which the Holy Spirit hath revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

At this point a Church of England clergyman, possibly the local minister, sought to silence Keach by telling him that he was in the pillory for "writing and publishing errors." Keach, recognizing a golden opportunity for public debate and witness, quickly replied, "Sir, can you prove them errors?" But before the clergyman could respond, he was rounded on by others in the crowd, who knew him to be a drunk. Keach proceeded to speak in defense of his convictions despite a couple of further attempts by the authorities to silence him. Eventually he was told that if he would not be silent, he would have to be gagged. After this he was silent except for his quoting of Matthew 5:10: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

On another occasion, when Keach, in the act of preaching, was apprehended by a troop of cavalrymen, four of them were so enraged with him that they swore they would trample him

to death with their horses. He was accordingly bound and forced to lie on the ground. But just as they were about to spur their horses down upon their victim, their commanding officer arrived and prevented them from harming Keach, who almost certainly would have been killed.

#### A Move to London and an Embrace of Calvinism

In 1668, Keach moved to London, where he joined a General Baptist cause meeting on Tooley Street in Southwark, London's first suburb located on the south shore of the River Thames. He was soon ordained an elder of this congregation. However, not long after his arrival in London he made the

acquaintance of two Calvinists, Hanserd Knollys (1599–1691) and William Kiffin (1616–1701), both of whom were also Baptists and who would become two of Keach's closest friends. By the time of his second marriage in 1672 to Susannah Partridge (d. 1732) of Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire—Jane—his first wife had died in 1670—he, too, had become a Calvinist. Of the details of this momentous theological move we know nothing. As the American historian J. Barry Vaughn has noted, the "date and circumstances of Benjamin Keach's acceptance of Calvinism is the greatest puzzle of his life." However, the fact that Knollys officiated at the marriage of Keach to Susannah Partridge certainly leads one to believe

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- BENJAMIN KEACH

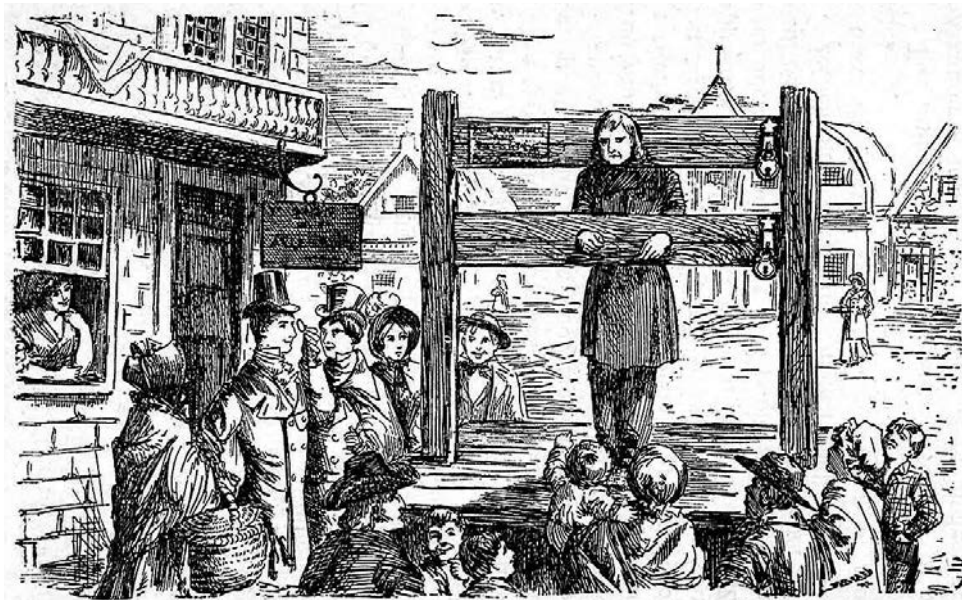
that this influential figure played a role in Keach's coming over to the Calvinistic Baptists. It is interesting to note that while such a move from the ranks of the General Baptists to those of the Calvinistic Baptists was not uncommon during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was rarely any traffic the other way.

In the same year of his marriage, Keach and a few likeminded individuals, possibly former members of the General Baptist cause on Tooley Street, began a Calvinistic Baptist work in Horselydown, Southwark. A meeting house was eventually erected, which, after a number of additions over the years, could hold about a thousand people. Keach was evidently a powerful preacher, whose sermons, his son-in-law later noted, were "full of solid divinity."

In addition to his labors as a pastor, Keach was also active in employing his pen to elucidate the Scriptures and defend Reformation truth. Of the many subjects upon which he wrote, his defense of the Calvinistic perspective on salvation would prove to be especially influential. As we have seen, during the 1680s and 90s, at the time when Keach was being widely published, Calvinism was increasingly a house under attack. The theology of Puritan theologians such as Keach and John Owen was coming to be regarded with scorn and disdain as outmoded and old-fashioned. Encouraged by the “middle way” thinking of Richard Baxter, which sought to develop a theological perspective that toned down some key doctrines of traditional Calvinism and embraced some elements of Arminianism, not a few of the heirs of Puritanism, in particular the English Presbyterians, were involved in a wholesale retreat from their Calvinistic heritage. This was not, however, the case with the Calvinistic Baptists, and that in large measure because of the writings of Keach.

### Calvinist Views on Salvation

Consider, for example, his final major work, *Gospel Mysteries Unveiled*, published only three years before his death in 1704. This work was originally a series of sermons which exhaustively expounded all of Christ’s parables and similitudes. The discussion of the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4–7), for instance, ran to sixteen sermons and well over a hundred pages in the four-volume edition that was issued in the 1810s. In his fifteenth sermon on this parable, Keach presented an understanding of regeneration and conversion that was common to most Calvinistic Baptists of his day, and served to distinguish them from other denominational bodies like the Presbyterians who were fast moving out of the Calvinist orbit. Keach began by observing that this parable clearly taught that “lost sinners cannot go home to God of themselves,” but must be carried to Him on the shoulders of Christ. To Keach, this doctrinal conclusion was clear first of all from the reference to the lost sheep being placed on the shoulders of the shepherd. When other passages of Scripture talk of the “finger of God” (Luke 11:20) or the “arm of the Lord” (Isa. 53:1), these anthropomorphisms are to be understood as references to God’s power. Likewise, Keach reasons, the mention of the shepherd’s shoulders in Luke 15:5 must be a reference to “Christ’s efficacious and effectual power,” especially, given the nature of



Benjamin Keach was pilloried in 1664 for writing a catechism

the parable, as it relates to regenerating and converting.

Keach then adduced further scriptural proof that regeneration was wholly God’s work, a work in which men and women are entirely passive. There was, for example, John 15:5, where Christ informed the apostles, “apart from Me you can do nothing.” This verse clearly has to do with the living out of the Christian life, but Keach evidently saw principles embedded in it that also apply to entry into that life. Keach understood Christ’s statement “apart from Me” to be a reference to Christ’s “almighty arm . . . made bare” and His “power exerted.” If it be true, therefore, that Christ’s power is vital for the presence of “acceptable fruit to God” during the Christian life, how much more is it the case that this power is required for “a sinner’s implantation into Christ”? Yet, because the verse has to do with living a fruitful Christian life, which involves effort on the part of both the believer and Christ, it does not really substantiate Keach’s assertion that the sinner is passive in regeneration.

The next verse he cited, John 6:44a, “No man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him,” is much more germane. The drawing involved here, according to Keach, is “the sublime and irresistible influences of the holy God upon the heart, by which he inclines, bows, and subjects the stubborn and rebellious will to believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ.” Keach rightly linked this verse with one later in the same chapter: “No man can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father” (John 6:65). That which is given, Keach emphasized, is what enables a sinner to come to Christ: the gift of the indwelling Spirit; the affections of a new heart; grace, faith, and divine power.

The third text that Keach cited is yet another Johannine one, John 1:13. The children of God, this verse asserts, are

born “not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” Regeneration is not based on one’s physical lineage, nor on one’s “legal privileges” (so Keach reads “nor of the will of the flesh”). Nor is the new birth accomplished by any “power of man’s will,” for “before a vital principle is infused” into a person, all that he or she can do are “dead works.” The “plain and evident” declaration of this verse is that “God is the efficient or great agent in regeneration.”

The Puritan preacher then quoted a series of Pauline verses—Romans 9:16; Titus 3:5–6; 2 Corinthians 3:5; 4:7; Philipians 2:12–13—as further confirmation of his position. With regard to the two texts from 2 Corinthians, Keach especially emphasized that when it came to preaching, it was not the preacher who could effect the change about which he had been talking. It is not “in the power of the most able minister in the world, that the word preached becomes effectual; no, no, . . . it is from God” that preaching receives the power to change the hearts of men and women.

In the next section of this sermon Keach provided additional arguments in support of his perspective on regeneration. These are based on a variety of Scripture texts, most of them drawn from the New Testament. It is in this section of the sermon that Keach defined what he understood regeneration and conversion to be. Regeneration he described as “the forming of Christ in the soul,” a new creation or a new birth, which is accomplished by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Keach believed that regeneration takes place when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell a person, and a new nature, that of Christ, is formed within the heart of that individual.

Like most of his fellow Puritans, Keach regarded this work of the Holy Spirit as absolutely essential to the salvation of a sinner. “It is this Spirit indeed,” he said in one of his sermons on the parable of the prodigal son, “who is the immediate agent that meets and brings lost sinners home to God: the Father and Son act and work in, and by the Holy Ghost.” By this means the enmity toward God that grips the heart of every unbeliever is taken away, and a love and delight for God as their chiefest good imparted. Moreover, just as an unborn child contributes nothing toward its formation in the womb, so are “sinners wholly passive in regeneration.” As Keach said elsewhere:

If God doth not meet a sinner, or move towards a sinner by his Spirit, the sinner can never meet him. . . . Can that which is dead move itself? Sinners are dead, or without a principle of divine life, naturally; and when life is infused, the soul must be influenced by the Holy Spirit.

When Keach defined conversion, he included what he had already said about regeneration and thus appears to blur the distinction between the two terms. Conversion, he stated, involves a “two-fold act”:

(1) Passive, which is the act of God’s Spirit, by which he infuseth a vital principle, and gracious habits, or divine qualities in the soul: in this act the creature is wholly passive. Christ . . . infuses life in the dead soul, as he did to dead Lazarus. (2) Active, whereby through the power of that grace, the sinner being quickened, is capacitated to believe, and return to God: being acted, we act; for the Holy Spirit . . . so moves the soul, and the soul acts, and moves towards God. . . . First the sinner’s heart is turned, and then the sinner returneth, then, and not till then: if Christ sought us not first, and found us not first, and took not us up first by his arms and shoulders of divine power, we should never seek, find, nor return to him.”

Although this passage shows Keach failing to observe a clear distinction between the two terms, his meaning is clear. What he calls the “passive” aspect of this “two-fold act” is what he has already termed “regeneration.” It is wholly an act of God, to which human beings contribute nothing. The Holy Spirit comes into the soul, and gives it both the power and the desire to turn to God. Thus, it is in regeneration that “the seed of actual conversion is sown” in a person’s heart. In conversion, on the other hand, the individual is vitally involved as his newly given capacity to turn to God is now exercised.

As is evident from the content of this sermon, Keach was typically Puritan in the delight that he took in emphasizing the way in which regeneration is a sovereign work of God. Keach was rightly convinced that the stranglehold of sin over men and women is so great that “only omnipotence can break its bond.”

### Critical of Hyper-Calvinism

Finally, it should be noted that in presenting this solidly Calvinistic perspective on regeneration and conversion Keach was careful to guard against High or Hyper-Calvinism, which was becoming more prevalent during the final years of his life. For instance, among the views that this position espoused was that of eternal justification. According to this doctrine, Christ’s commitment to suffer for the sins of the elect prior to the creation of the world meant that even then they were regarded as being actually justified. The elect can thus be regarded as having been justified from eternity. If this were true, then saving faith is reduced to a realization of what God has already done in the act of eternal justification.

Keach, however, steadfastly opposed this position during the 1690s. In his main work on justification, *A Medium Betwixt Two Extremes* (1698), Keach pointedly asked:

Do we not all preach to all out of Christ as unto ungodly ones, to such that are under Wrath and Condemnation in their own Persons, and so remain until they believe or have Union with Christ? Our Lord *came not to call*

*the Righteous*, as such, neither self-righteous ones, not such who in a Gospel-sense are righteous Persons, *but Sinners to repentance*; to such that were really lost in the first Adam, and under the Bondage of Sin, and the Law.

Men and women become justified only at the point of believing in Christ.


Keach had made the same point fifteen years earlier in his popular allegory, *Travels of True Godliness* (1683). At one point in his journey, Godliness encounters a man whom Keach described as “a haughty looking person who seemed greatly disposed to dispute about religion” and to whom he gave the name “Antinomian.” In response to Godliness’ query about what Antinomian believed with regard to justification, the latter stated that he believed “all the elect are personally and actually justified from eternity.” Antinomian was confident that the love which God had for the elect before their conversion was identical to that which He has for them after it. “God sees no sin,” he says, “nor ever did, in his elect.” Godliness’ response to this view was unequivocal: It was “a doctrine Jesus Christ abhors” and which brings reproach upon Calvinism. Godliness goes on to say that the very notion of being justified presupposes that one was formerly in a state of guilt and condemnation. If unbelievers are under God’s wrath (as John 3:18, 36 bear witness) and at the same time also “actually justified,” then the very notion of justification becomes meaningless.

As Keach rightly realized, this debate about the nature of justification had immensely practical consequences. In the Antinomian schema, that style of preaching where the lost are explicitly urged to turn to Christ becomes quite unnecessary. What is needed in preaching is simply the proclamation

of what God has done in Christ. God will use that to awaken the elect and show them what He has already done for them. Keach’s pulpit ministry, however, was characterized by vigorous evangelism and regular calls to the unconverted to respond to Christ in faith. According to C. H. Spurgeon, in speaking to the lost Keach was “intensely direct, solemn, and impressive, not flinching to declare the terrors of the Lord, nor veiling the freeness of divine grace.”

Typical of Keach’s evangelistic appeals to the unconverted is the following, cited by Spurgeon to illustrate the above statement:

Come, venture your souls on Christ’s righteousness; Christ is able to save you though you are ever so great sinners. Come to Him, throw yourselves at the feet of Jesus. *Look to Jesus*, who came to seek and save them that were lost . . . You may have the water of life freely. Do not say, “I want qualifications or a meekness to come to Christ.” Sinner, dost thou thirst? Dost thou see a want of righteousness? ’Tis not a righteousness; but ’tis a sense of the want of righteousness, which is rather the qualification thou shouldst look at. Christ hath righteousness sufficient to clothe you, bread of life to feed you, grace to adorn you. Whatever you want, it is to be had in Him. We tell you there is help in Him, salvation in Him. “Through the propitiation in His blood” you must be justified, and that by faith alone.

Here we see Puritan evangelism at its best: cleaving to Christ alone for salvation, and intensely desirous that others might truly know this joy. 



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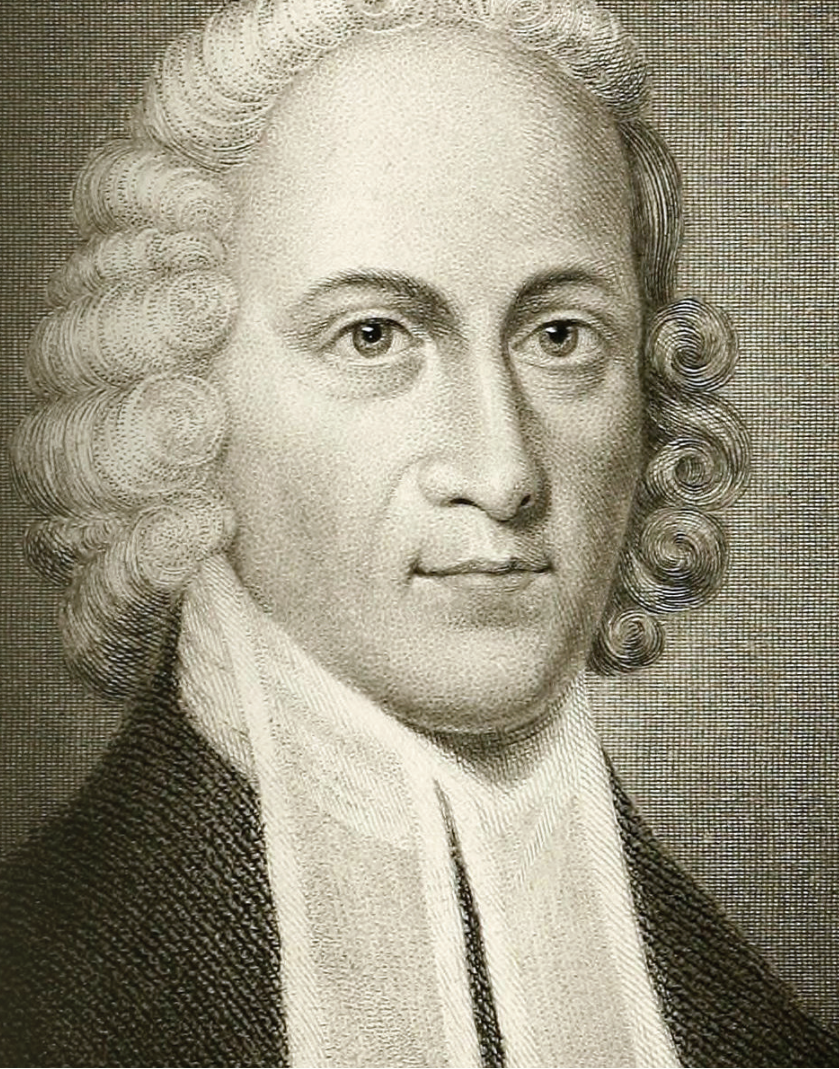
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## THE LIFE & LEGACY of JONATHAN EDWARDS, PT. 2

STEVEN J. LAWSON



**I**n December 1734, a sovereign movement of God's Spirit came to the New England area. Jonathan Edwards preached a series of sermons on justification by faith, which was "directed against the tendency toward Arminianism . . . then developing in New England." Through the winter months, nearly all the people of the town were seized by a deep concern for their souls, and more than three hundred professed Christ. Edwards wrote: "The town seemed to be full of the presence of God; it never was so full of love, nor so full of joy. . . . There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house . . . everyone [was] earnestly intent on the public worship." There was scarcely a person, young or old, not concerned about eternal matters.

After this intense revival (1734–1736), Edwards recorded its extraordinary effects in an eight-page letter to Benjamin Colman, a Boston minister. Edwards later expanded the letter's content and Colman subsequently published it as *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton* (1736). This account soon reached London, where Isaac Watts, the gifted hymn writer, and John Guyse, a London minister, published it in England. Immediately, Edwards's influence was expanded

overseas. Edwards wrote:

Our public assemblies were then beautiful, the congregation was then alive in God's service, everyone earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth; the assembly in general were, from time to time in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors.

### **The Great Awakening Reignites (1740–1749)**

A fuller measure of God's power came to the Colonies in 1740–1742. This movement was linked with the itinerant preaching trips of the English evangelist George Whitefield. By traveling throughout the Colonies, calling men to repentance and faith, Whitefield helped spread evangelical Christianity on American shores. Edwards invited Whitefield to Northampton to preach, and sat on the front pew and wept under the power of his pulpit ministry. Throughout New England, it is estimated that, according to B. K. Kuiper, "out of a population of 300,000, between 25,000 and 50,000 new members were added to the churches." God was truly at work.

In Edwards, the awakening had "a vigorous defender." In

fact, the awakening reached its height on July 8, 1741, when Edwards preached his most famous sermon at Enfield, Connecticut, titled “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” The sermon was based on Deuteronomy 32:35, “Their foot shall slide in due time” (KJV). Edwards had preached the sermon a month earlier in his own church with little effect. But when he delivered it in Enfield, a powerful revival occurred. Sinners were convicted and souls were shaken. Stephen Williams was present for the sermon and noted its effect: “Before the sermon was done, there was a great moaning and crying out throughout the whole house. What shall I do to be saved? Oh I am going to Hell. Oh what shall I do for Christ?”

Mardsen comments, “What is extraordinary in this sermon is . . . the sustained imagery Edwards employs to pierce the hearts of the hearers. . . . He focuses everything on the central theme of what it means for guilty sinners to be held in the hands of God . . . they were left with no escape.” Edwards motioned for silence as people clung to the pews before them for fear of dropping into hell.

But with the awakening came many emotional excess. A great controversy arose within the churches regarding the true nature of this movement. Many ministers, known as Old Lights, opposed the revival, while the pastors who supported it were called New Lights. Yale College was torn down the middle. After a turbulent trustees meeting, Edwards gave the commencement address the next day, on September 10, 1741, in which he gave full support to the revival. In an exposition of 1 John 4:1–6, Edwards gave five distinctive marks by which people might recognize an authentic work of the Spirit. Such a work, he said, “(1) raises [people’s] esteem of Jesus as Son of God and Savior of the world, (2) leads them to turn from their corruptions and lusts to the righteousness of God, (3) increases their regard for Holy Scripture, (4) establishes their minds in the objective truths of revealed religion, and (5) evokes genuine love for God and man.” The message was published a month later under the title *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741) and was given a wide circulation.

Edwards again wrote on the subject of revival in a major work entitled *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746). In this work, which became, according to Samuel Storms, “the most important and accurate analysis of religious experience ever written . . . [Edwards] endeavored to identify what constitutes true and authentic spirituality.” He wrestled with the difference between true and false Christian experience, listing what might *not* necessarily indicate saving faith and what are the true marks of conversion. This book is regarded by many historians as the most thorough treatment on spiritual life in American history.

Edwards’s significant influence was extended over many young men preparing for the ministry. He preached the ordination sermons for numerous young ministers. Others lived

with him, such as Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Buell, and Samuel Hopkins, who would later become influential figures in New England. Another who stayed in the Edwards home was a young missionary to the Delaware Indians in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, David Brainerd, who died there of tuberculosis on October 9, 1747. Edwards’s daughter, Jerusha, was Brainerd’s nurse in the home and, tragically, she contracted tuberculosis and died months later. Afterward, Edwards edited and published Brainerd’s *Diary*, a record of Brainerd’s “selfless devotion to missions to the Indians.” Further, he wrote a biography of this young man, titled *An Account of the Life of the Rev. David Brainerd* (1749), which inspired the missionary movement of the next century.

### The Painful Separation (1750)

Despite Edwards’s ministry successes at Northampton for more than two decades, his distinguished pastorate came to an abrupt and bitter end in what Stephen Nichols calls “one of the great mysteries of church history.” His predecessor and grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, had invited to the communion table people who, though baptized, had not professed Christ. Edwards, on the other hand, according to Mark Dever, became convinced that “they must profess Christianity [and bring forth the fruits of conversion in their lives] before they could take Communion.” A firestorm against him soon developed in the church.

In a letter to his Scottish friend John Erskine (1749), the year before his dismissal, Edwards reveals some of this mounting tension:

A very great difficulty has arisen between me and my people, relating to qualifications for communion at the Lord’s table. My honored grandfather Stoddard, my predecessor in the ministry over this church, strenuously maintained the Lord’s Supper to be a converting ordinance, and urged all to come who were not of scandalous life, though they knew themselves to be unconverted. I formerly conformed to this practice, but I have had difficulties with respect to it, which have been long increasing; till I dared no longer in the former way: which has occasioned great uneasiness among my people, and has filled all the country with noise; which has obliged me to write something on the subject, which is now in the press. I know not but this affair will issue in a separation between me and my people. I desire your prayers that God would guide me in every step in this affair.

This requirement of *personal* faith in Christ proved to be too much for the older members. The opposition escalated when several prominent families marshaled the majority, only to dismiss Edwards on June 22, 1750—truly one of the great tragedies of church history.

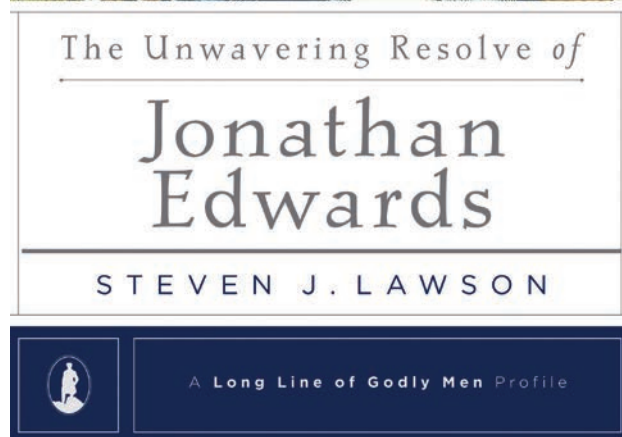
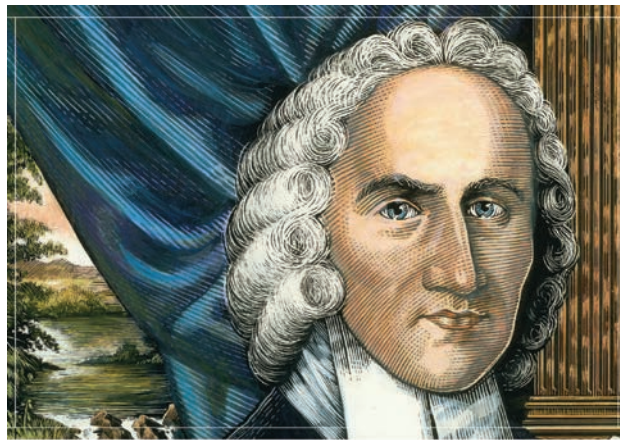
The next Sunday, Edwards preached his farewell sermon from 2 Corinthians 1:14, in which he spoke of that final day when they would gather together before God as pastor and congregation and give an account to Him. Edwards, in a remarkable display of humility, remained at Northampton for a year, occasionally filling the pulpit until his successor could be found. Numerous ministry offers came to Edwards, including invitations to pastor in Boston and Scotland. A group of loyal supporters in Northampton even wished to start a new church there. But Edwards declined each of these offers. Once his replacement was found, he accepted a call to be the pastor and missionary to Native Americans on the frontier settlement of Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

### Pioneer Missionary at Stockbridge (1751–1757)

In the winter of 1751, Edwards moved to begin this new work with the Mohican and Mohawk Indians in the isolation of Stockbridge, only forty miles away. There Edwards faithfully pastored and preached the gospel to approximately two hundred and fifty Indians and a dozen English families. Now out of the public eye, Edwards experienced both highs and lows. Positively, God granted Edwards many converts and changed lives, but negatively, there was again conflict and controversy. The Williams family, which had caused him much trouble in Northampton, continued the fight in Stockbridge. Colonel Ephraim Williams, a thorn in his flesh, tried to smear Edwards's name, accusing him of embezzlement from the school established to teach the Indians. Although Edwards was cleared of any wrongdoing, the Mohawks left the school, weary of the attacks against their leader. As a result, the school was forced to close and the mission was later ended.

But in these years, Edwards was given time to put his thoughts on paper. Spending thirteen hours a day in study, he wrote his three weightiest works: *Freedom of the Will* (1754), *The End for Which God Created the World* (1755), and *Original Sin* (1758). *Freedom of the Will*, his greatest literary

achievement, was a monumental treatment on the inability of the fallen will to believe upon Christ. According to Joel Beeke and Randall Pederson in their work, *Meet the Puritans*, “Edwards argues that only the regenerate person can truly choose the transcendent God; that choice can be made only through a disposition that God infuses in regeneration.” The one who wills to believe in Christ, Edwards taught, is the one in whom the Holy Spirit has already performed His sovereign, monergistic work in the new birth.



Purchase *The Unwavering Resolve of Jonathan Edwards* by Steven J. Lawson by visiting [Ligonier.org](http://Ligonier.org).

### The Princeton Presidency (1758)

When Princeton College, then named the College of New Jersey, became in need of a third president, the trustees turned to Edwards. The previous president, Aaron Burr, Sr.—Edwards's son-in-law, husband of his daughter Esther—had died in office on September 24, 1757. Initially, Edwards declined their offer, insisting that he was unworthy for such a high position. But the trustees persisted, and despite some reluctance, Edwards accepted the presidency. In the dead of winter, Edwards made the arduous trip to New Jersey with his daughter Esther, her two small children, Sally and Aaron Jr., the future vice president of the United States, and Edwards's 17-year-old daughter Lucy. They arrived in Princeton in January 1758, with Sarah remaining behind until the harsh winter had passed. On February 16, 1758, Edwards was inaugurated

the third president of Princeton, the school that would later emerge as the single greatest theological influence in America in the nineteenth century.

Edwards then prepared to write what he believed would be his *magnum opus*, a systematic theology tracing the history of redemption through the Scriptures. But God had other plans. Within his first month as president, there was a small-pox outbreak, and Edwards chose to be inoculated to show others they need not fear this medical progress. But Edwards contracted a secondary infection. He died on March 22, only five weeks into his presidency. With only his daughters Esther

and Lucy at his side, he whispered his last words:

It seems to me to be the will of God, that I must shortly leave you; therefore give my kindest love to my dear wife, and tell her, that the uncommon union, which has so long subsisted between us, has been of such a nature, as I trust is spiritual, and therefore will continue forever; and I hope she will be supported under so great a trial, and submit cheerfully to the will of God.

Edwards died as he lived—*resolved* to live for the glory of God. Upon receiving the tragic news of Jonathan's death, Sarah wrote to Esther, who had lost both her husband, Aaron Sr., and now her father, in order to console her:

My very dear child, What shall I say? A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. O that we may kiss the rod, and lay our hands upon our mouths! The Lord has done it. He has made me adore His goodness, that we had him so long. But my God lives; and He has my heart. O what a legacy my husband, and your father, has left us! We are all given to God; and there I am, and love to be.

Your affectionate mother, Sarah Edwards

Esther herself died a few days later on April 7, from a similar reaction to the smallpox vaccine. Sarah did not arrive in Princeton until later that summer. When she did, she stood over the fresh graves of her son-in-law, her husband, and her daughter. Then she herself contracted dysentery and died five months later on October 2, 1758. Sarah was buried next to her husband in the Princeton Cemetery, a testimony that their “uncommon union” was “spiritual and therefore eternal.”

### Edwards Was Resolved

The life and legacy of Jonathan Edwards endures strong to this day. Historian Mark Noll concludes that he produced “one of the most thorough and compelling bodies of theological writing in the history of America.” Through this corpus of work, this Massachusetts Congregational pastor speaks even louder to this generation than he did to his own time. A moral excellence exudes from him that is immediately apparent to all who study his remarkable life and writings. This extraordinary figure, called “America’s greatest theologian and philosopher and the last Puritan,” is rightfully recognized by Beeke and Pederson as the “powerful force behind the First Great Awakening” and “a champion of Christian zeal and spirituality.” To this day, Edwards remains “one of the great fathers of evangelical Christianity in America.”

This being so, let us return to our primary question: Why Edwards? What put him on a path to such greatness? The answer lies in this fact. Edwards was a rare combination of

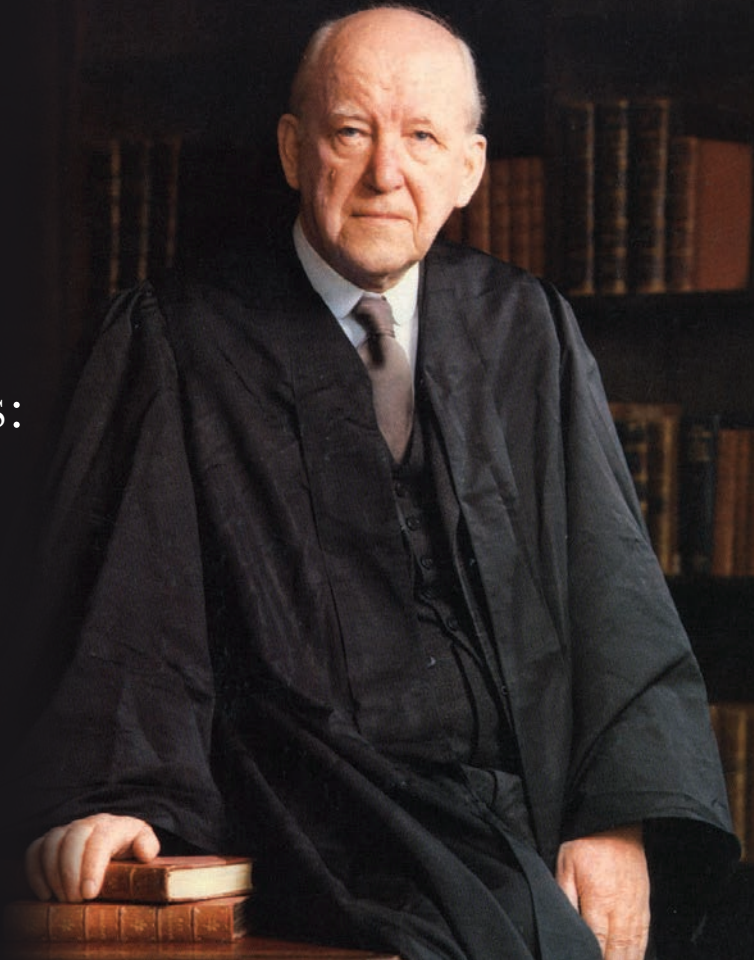
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RESOLVE.

Reformed theology, extraordinary giftedness, and fervent piety. However, it is this latter virtue—his true spirituality, combined with a fixed resolve—that positioned him to be so mightily used by God. Few have equaled his relentless pursuit of personal holiness. Edwards’s inner spirituality is what so fitted him to be the mighty instrument in the hand of God that he was.

It was in his late teens, while serving as an interim pastor in New York City, that Edwards recorded the “Resolutions” that would set the course of his life. Remarkably, Edwards followed these seventy resolutions to the end. In this sense, it is no secret why God used him as He did. Edwards was singularly focused on living the Christian life with fixed determination for God’s glory. He was fully committed to honoring the Lord in *every* area of his life, and to doing so with an unwavering resolve. ♦

# DISCOVERING *THE* PURITANS: THE PURITAN INFLUENCE *ON* *THE* LIFE AND MINISTRY *OF* DR. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

DUSTIN W. BENGE



**D**uring the mid-nineteenth century, British publishers churned out numerous multi-volume sets of collected works by Puritan divines: Richard Sibbes (7 vols.), Richard Baxter (23 vols.), John Owen (24 vols.), John Bunyan (4 vols.), Thomas Manton (22 vols.), Thomas Goodwin (12 vols.), Thomas Brooks (6 vols.), William Bridge (5 vols.), George Swinnock (4 vols.), and David Clarkson (3 vols.). The personal library of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a British Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century, was filled with such Puritan and Reformed works. Yet, according to one author, “these writings fell out of fashion with alarming rapidity in the last four decades of the nineteenth century.” The Puritans were almost completely eclipsed by a variety of new movements. The year 1925 would begin to reverse that eclipse when Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) was introduced to a formerly well-known Puritan, Richard Baxter. That discovery would unleash a restoration movement of Puritan theology and influence that continues to gain momentum within the world of twenty-first-century evangelicalism.

## Puritan Discovery

As a young minister rooted in the teaching of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, Martyn Lloyd-Jones was almost entirely ignorant of the massive theological output of the Puritan divines. Scantly acquainted with John Bunyan and Oliver Cromwell, Puritan writings never found their place within the Welsh Methodist context and culture of Lloyd-Jones’ childhood. Lloyd-Jones first stumbled upon the Puritans in 1925 when he saw a publisher’s advertisement for a new abridgment of an *Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, and this led him to read a biography of this notable Puritan by F. J. Powicke. He was so taken by Baxter that he delivered an address on “Puritanism” to the literary and debating society at his home church at Charing Cross in March 1926. The topic was a great surprise to his friends. He justified his subject selection in his opening remarks:

I chanced to tell a friend of mine the other day that I was coming here tonight to talk about Puritanism. He asked me a question, which has deeply impressed itself on my mind, to this affect, “Surely this has entailed a tremendous amount of reading? Have you gone deeply into seventeenth-century history and literature and have you read the standard works on the subject?” I confessed that

I had fallen very short of his demands and that my acquaintance with the said works was particularly casual and superficial. But I did not stop there. I pointed out that I was not going to talk about Puritanism—that I deprecated talking *about* or around anything, but I was coming here to talk Puritanism.

At this stage, his seventeenth-century reading was limited to *The Pilgrim's Progress* and lives of Baxter and George Fox. However, over the next decade, Lloyd-Jones's understanding of Reformed and Puritan theology firmed up considerably. He purchased other Puritan works from London's second-hand bookstores and received second-hand editions of the works of Baxter and Owen as wedding presents. In his magisterial biography of Lloyd-Jones, Iain Murray recounts that in 1929, while waiting for a train, he visited a bookshop in Cardiff and fell upon a two-volume edition of the works of Jonathan Edwards which he purchased for five shillings. "I devoured these volumes," he later recalled, "and literally just read and read them." On a visit to Canada in 1932, he poured over the writings of the Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield, who had rearticulated early modern Reformed orthodoxy for a modern audience. In January 1939, Lloyd-Jones was introduced to Geoffrey Williams's Beddington Free Grace Library, a collection of around twenty thousand Puritan and Reformed books, and recorded that he felt like the Queen of Sheba visiting King Solomon. He also borrowed piles of old books from Sion College Library and Dr. Williams's Library. He was busy excavating the Reformed theological tradition.

After several years of Puritan study and discovery, Lloyd-Jones concluded that experimental knowledge, or practical piety, should interpret Puritanism instead of merely vast intellectual knowledge. This classification was not one devised by Lloyd-Jones himself, but was commonly expressed by the Puritans as a way to describe the Christian experience. Puritan Thomas Shepherd (1605–1649) wrote, "Saints have an experimental knowledge of the work of grace, by virtue of which they come to know it as certainly . . . as by feeling heat, we know that fire is hot; by tasting honey, we know it is sweet." Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) declared, "Experience is the life of a Christian." For the Puritan, intellectual assent to Christian doctrine had to be balanced with the practical outworking of God's grace in life experiences. This is precisely the lens through which Lloyd-Jones viewed the whole of Puritan thought and doctrine. He states:

If you wish to know what Puritanism really is, don't read large volumes on the subject by men who may be scholars but never were Puritans, but rather read the life-stories of Puritans such as I have named, and pray God to give you light not merely to see what is in print but also to see what is between the lines. The great truth in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's*

*Progress* is not that Christian endured great hardships on his way to the eternal city, but that Christian thought it to be worth his while to endure those hardships

The only people who have a right to say anything about Christianity are those who have felt its force in their own lives . . . I do claim, therefore, with modesty and humility, that I have known something, I believe, of the spirit which animated the old Puritans—the spirit which all Puritans have felt at some time or other. I cannot claim, unfortunately, to be a real Puritan, because an analysis of my life finds me seriously wanting, but there have been moments, unhappily infrequent, when I have felt that I could move mountains. It is with the memory of those moments that I hope to be able to tell you something of what Puritanism means.

Lloyd-Jones argued the Puritan was not "the strong man. He is a very weak man who has been given strength to realize that he is weak. I would say of all men and women that we are all weak, very weak, the difference being that the sinners do not appreciate the fact that they are weak, whereas the Christians do." Lloyd-Jones believed it was this experimental knowledge of their own frailty and weakness that caused the Puritan divines to watch carefully how they lived and conducted themselves. He observed, "Soberness and restraint are the key-notes of the character of the Puritans. Have you any objection to them? If you have, you cannot regard yourself as a Christian, because these are two essentially Christian virtues." Hence, rather than being merely interested in an intellectual knowledge of theology, the Puritans were united in their strong commitment to integrate their personal experience of God into their daily living.

### Puritan Legacy

The Puritan, Lloyd-Jones declared, is distinct both in his sorrows and joys. The knowledge of God prevents him from living as other men do. He has indeed not ceased from sin, yet he cannot sin as an unbeliever does. Knowing the presence of God makes that impossible:

He sins while God is watching him and in these times God is terrible to him. He wanders abroad to do evil like a fox, conscious of his guilt, but there is one difference between him and the fox, for he knows that "the Hound of Heaven" is on his track. He knows that he is no longer a free agent—he cannot do as he likes because God loves him and God is determined to hold him back from committing evil . . . "Why cannot I sin like everyone else?" he demands. "Why must I be followed? Can I never get away from God?" . . .

Is it surprising that, to the Puritan, living is a serious matter, demanding the whole of his time and attention? If

"... THE PURITAN IS ALWAYS A CRUSADER. TO HIM CHRISTIANITY IS A FIGHT, A NOBLE CRUSADE, NOT MERELY A DEFENSIVE ACTION AGAINST PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, BUT ALSO A CHALLENGE TO AND AN ASSAULT UPON THEIR FORTRESSES."

- MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

you have once seen the face of God, there is nothing else worth seeing as far as you are concerned. All these other things merely obscure the vision, therefore they must be swept away . . . If anything interferes with the worshipping of God it must be destroyed . . . It is because of these feelings that the Puritan is always a crusader. To him Christianity is a fight, a noble crusade, not merely a defensive action against the principalities and powers, but also a challenge to and an assault upon their fortresses . . .

Oh! how far we have wandered from this! "Plain living and high thinking" are no more! The church is no longer distinct from the world, for instead of the church going out into the world we have allowed the world to capture the church from the inside. We nearly all recognize the position. When will we return to Puritanism? Let us be up and clear the brushwood and the thorns that have overgrown the face of our spiritual world! Let us take unto ourselves "the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"—yes, stand, face to face with God.

Lloyd-Jones found an echo of something in the Puritans which he already knew in his own spirit. His own deepening sense of sin was a key to the interpretation of their "soberness and restraint." In a letter to a friend in 1926, after speaking of the love he received from his mother and from his brother, Vincent, he contrasted what "they think of me" with reality:

They see only that which is good in me, they see me only at my best. I shudder when I realize how unworthy I am and how ignorant they are of the dark and hidden recesses of my soul where all that is devilish and hideous reigns supreme, at times breaking through on to the surface and causing a turmoil that God and I alone know of.

Biographer Iain Murray says, "There is reason to think that it was this sense of unworthiness before God which was one of the ultimate obstacles to his clear conviction that he was indeed being called to the ministry of the gospel." Murray continues, "The final resolution of that difficulty was not the removal of his sense of unworthiness, but the persuasion that God loved him, and had saved him, in spite of all that he deserved." He saw the gospel more clearly as "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth," and it was that very sight which led him to understand the Pauline and Puritan "passion for saving souls." By June 1926, the struggle was over. He knew what the future must be. It was almost as though the decision was made for him and he could resist it no longer: "Whatever authority I may have as a preacher is not the result of any decision on my part. It was God's hand that laid hold of me, and drew me out, and separated me to this work."

By the late 1940s, the young J. I. Packer was embarking on the same exercise of Puritan discovery, after he came across the works of John Owen, uncut and unread, in the library of the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union. For both men, this encounter with the Puritans struck them with the force of a revelation. In particular, they were impressed by the theological and spiritual depth of these aged books. Armed with these old texts, they set about transforming the evangelical subculture. Lloyd-Jones's son-in-law, Sir Fred Catherwood, explained his impact:

He showed our generation clearly that the strand of pietistic evangelicalism, the muscular Christianity of the varsity and public school camps, the devotional piety of the Brethren, the emotional dedication at the great conventions, the revivalism of the big interdenominational missions, was not enough . . . He led the evangelical wing of the church back into the center of theological argument, not by conceding a thing, but by going back to its foundation in the Reformation. He, almost alone to begin with, wove in again the strong central strand of reformed theology to evangelical teaching—a strand which had



almost snapped off in the late nineteenth century, when Spurgeon seemed to lose to the rising tide of liberalism in the “downgrade” controversy.

While Lloyd-Jones was most famous for promoting the Reformed cause through his preaching, his role in disseminating Puritan books was almost equally important. At times he did this through personal conversation, as when he recommended Puritan writings to the Christian Brethren founder of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, C. Stacey Woods. But it was the institutional structures that had the greatest impact. Lloyd-Jones was a key figure in the establishment of the Evangelical Library (the former Beddington Free Grace Library), which opened in 1945 and lent out tens of thousands of Reformed books to pastors in Britain and overseas. In 1950, at the prompting of J. I. Packer, he co-founded the Puritan Conference, which met annually over two days just before Christmas every year to discuss papers on Protestant church history and theology, with a particular focus on the seventeenth century. Most importantly, Lloyd-Jones helped to establish the Banner of Truth Trust in 1957, soon became the most important publisher and promoter of Puritan and Reformed literature in the English-speaking world.

### “A Kind of Puritan”

Although the Doctor always described himself as “an eighteenth-century man”—a follower of Daniel Rowland, Jonathan Edwards and the like—there is no doubt that he himself played a key role in bringing back biblical, Reformed thinking into evangelical life. As J. I. Packer has pointed out in his brilliant essay of the same name, the Doctor was “A Kind of Puritan.”

The interest Lloyd-Jones created after the war in Puritan life and thought has thankfully continued after his death. Ironically, some of Puritanism’s most powerful protagonists in the 1990s are Anglicans, men such as J. I. Packer and Alister McGrath, whose book, *Roots That Refresh*, makes a strong case for the need of evangelicalism at the end of the twentieth century to get back to the biblical roots that the Puritans discovered in their own day.

As Lloyd-Jones recognized, the Puritans always lead one back to the Scriptures, and to a vibrant, living, life-changing relationship with the living God. It is the Bible that tells us what we need to know, and for the Puritans, biblical spirituality was at the very heart of what Christianity was all about.



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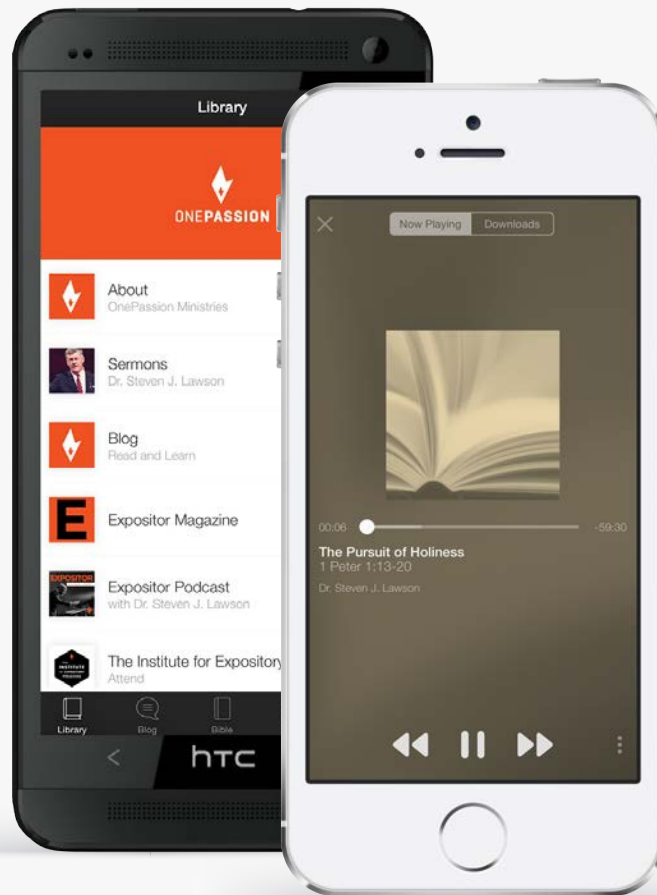
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