

The Protestant Reformation

Part 6: The High Water Mark of the Reformation

We have looked at Germany, Switzerland, France, and England and Scotland. Now at those Englishmen whose intent was to “reform whatever was not reformed.”

Puritanism began under Elizabeth’s “Middle Way.”

But the Puritan was bothered that although a national church existed, the great majority of England had no idea of saving grace.

The “seed beds” of puritanism had become Cambridge and Oxford; students graduating were exhorted to go preach the gospel.

- Prophesyings
- Elder Rule

But Elizabeth resisted the Puritan pressure.

- Thomas Cartwright
- Edmund Grindal

But Elizabeth pushed back.

- John Whitgift

Puritanism was now seen as sedition.

The hope of the Puritan was that Elizabeth would be followed by James VI of Scotland, a king raised on Calvinism.

But James was a disappointment. He resisted elder rule or Presbyterianism, but did favor a new bible translation – The King James Bible.

- The Book of Sports

As a result some puritans began to meet separately and were called “Separatists.” They were the first fundamental, non-denominational bible churches. Many would become Baptists.

Some however would leave England all together for Holland and some in Holland for America and a “New England.”

After James died, his son, Charles I, succeeded him and promptly married a French Catholic queen. England felt the Armada had sailed again.

The opposite of a Puritan in England was a “High Church” Anglican, who called the Reformation “the deformation.” Charles re-instituted the *Book of Sports* and also the Catholics affectations of that Elizabeth had removed.

The Puritans began to push back.

Prynne, Burton, and Bastwicke

It appeared Bloody Mary had returned.

Charles continued to press his hand. Scotland was ordered to resemble the new English “Catholicism.” Charles sent two English armies into Scotland to persuade them, but the Scottish Covenanters beat them both.

Charles followed with an Irish Catholic army but was defeated by an army of Puritans led by Oliver Cromwell and English civil war erupted between those loyal to the king and those loyal to the Bible, the Puritans.

The Puritans won and Charles became the first European Monarch to be beheaded.

- The Westminster Assembly
- The removal of all bishops
- A Calvinistic Confession
- The Book of Common Prayer was removed
- England was ruled by a parliament and then by Cromwell, the Lord Protector.
- England became a country of a degree of religious toleration.

Does this sound like Puritanism won?

- Quakers
- Muggletonians
- Ranters
- The Puritan enforcement of public morality

By 1660, a new generation had arisen. Teenagers had grown up. Puritanism was detested and England longed for a normal king and “days of merriment.” The new king became Charles II, son of the beheaded Charles I. He was the opposite of everything England had been under Cromwell.

The reaction against puritanism was widespread and savage.

- The Prayer Book was re-imposed
- All clergy had to admit to it
- 20% of English Ministers were removed, all were Puritans.
- The Conventicle Act
- The Five Mile Act
- 20,000 Puritans were sent to prison over the next 20 years.
- Non-Anglicans could not hold public office or attend English universities.

Puritanism wasted away as puritan authorship and preaching was legally gagged.

By 1700, Puritans were referred to as dissenters.

America got the best of England’s “worst.” 20,000 Puritans had left for America.

What can we learn from the Puritans?

1. they were passionately biblical
2. They were passionately Trinitarian
3. They were passionately covenantal:
 - The Trinity
 - God and the saint
 - among the church
4. They were passionate about the sovereignty of God, Calvinistic to the core.
5. They were passionate about the governance of God over a nation.
6. They were passionate about the necessity of conversion.
7. They were passionate about the purpose and benefit of trials.
8. They were comforted about the “two worlds”, earth and heaven to come.

Their mistakes proved fatal.

1. Christian behavior could be imposed on all of society.
2. Christian conversion could be assumed on one’s children.