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**Core Seminar**

**Church History**

**Class 9: The Puritans of the 17th Century**

*“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”* I Peter 2:9-10

**Introduction**

What comes to mind when you hear the word “Puritan” today? Hard to think of another religious group that is more maligned today, maybe televangelists. “Puritan” has become a negative adjective. Someone may be described as “puritanical” and its not a compliment. **H.L. Mencken**, a journalist for the Baltimore Sun in the early 20th century, said *“A Puritan was someone who feared that someone, somewhere, somehow might be having fun.”* **Garrison Keiler**, of Lake Wobegon fame, said that the Puritans came to America in the hopes of discovering greater restrictions than were permissible under English law. These are just two examples of the popular negative stereotypes of the Puritans. This morning we want to explore more deeply: who were the Puritans?

The Puritans were a group of English clergy and lay people, who from about 1550 to 1662, the time of the Reformation to the Restoration of the Monarchy, were intent on purifying the Church of England by shaping it in structure and vision to the Bible. They are the reformers of the reformation.

Why is it that we will dedicated a class to studying these individuals? First, their thought and practice are precursors to us. They have had a large influence on how we as a church operate.

I also want to start with a few caveats: This class is not meant to be a defense of the puritans, but like the other figures that we looked at there is much we can learn from them, both good and ill. They are sinners. They were blind to many things, even though we would agree with their theology. Here is a lesson, drawn from them: What are our blind spots?

Any questions or comments before we dig in?

**The Reformation (Two Solas)**

In considering the Puritans, we are tracing the steps after the English Reformation, so it’s good to briefly revisit two principles of the Reformation:

**1. Theology of Justification**

The reformation of Luther, Calvin, and others restored the great, Biblical idea that Justification (being declared right with God) is received only by faith. Good works are evidence but are not effective in justifying. A question of the means of being made righteous – works have no value of merit towards salvation. The righteousness is not our own, it is the righteousness of Christ. Luther himself called this “The Sweet Exchange.”

**2. Theology of Scripture & Centrality of Preaching - Sola Scriptura (“by Scriptura alone”)**

Previously, the Roman Catholic church insisted that the Bible submitted to the authority of the Church, banning translation into vernacular languages, and keeping it in the hands of the clergy.

The Reformers argued Sola Scriptura, the opposite, that the church, the people of God, must submit to the authority of the Bible. So they translated it into common languages so that people could read it for themselves, Luther: German & Tyndale into English. The church gets its authority from the Bible, not vice versa (the church submits to the authority of the Bible). With the bible in the people’s hands, the interpretation of it by the pastor became the focus of the Puritan churches. So the sermon, the exposition and preaching of the Bible, took center stage in the life of the church, in the life of the Puritans. The church was to be an Assembly of God’s people, regenerated by his Spirit, bound together by his Spirit, and sustained by his Word.

**Consequences of Sola Fide and Sola Scriptura on The Church**

**The Church** **Service**

This centrality of Scripture dramatically changed their service. Previously, in Roman Catholicism: the mass and infant baptism, not the preaching of God’s word, were the means of salvation. Architecture: baptismal font at the door of the church, altar for the mass was at the center; pulpit pushed off to the side. Sermons, if there was one, lasted. 5 to 10 minutes. Now the preaching of the Word of God moved to the center (our church), to take place from an elevated pulpit instead of the altar.

**The Pastor**

As you might imagine this also dramatically changed the role of **the pastor.** Instead of someone who performed the mass or read a brief homily, he was to be a preacher and a shepherd of God’s flock. Thus arose an intense concern for training men for ministry and ensuring that only gifted, trained men served as pastors.

In the 16th century, they had their work cut out for them. In the mid-16th century (1551), Bishop John Hooper surveyed the ministers in his diocese and asked the following questions:

* + - * 1. *How many commandments are there?*
        2. *Where are they to be found?*
        3. *Repeat them.*
        4. *What are the articles of the Christian faith?*
        5. *Prove them from Scripture.*
        6. *Repeat the Lord’s Prayer.*
        7. *How do you know it is the Lord’s?*
        8. *Where is it to be found?*
        9. *\*\*\*\*Out of 311 clergy, on 50 could answer these questions, and 19 of those did poorly. 10 did not know the Lord’s prayer and 8 couldn’t answer a single question.*

**The Puritan Story: James I**

If you were here last week, we talked about the shape of the Church of England as it developed under the reign of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth. During the Elizabethan period the Church maintained a balance between a reformed, moderately Calvinist theology with a practice and government that appeared more Romish (episcopacy, recitations, saints holidays, vestements).

But many Puritans wanted reform, and wanted to abolish the bishops and have presbyteries, and some were even Congregationalists. \*\*NOTE: Mot monolithic group. Some Puritans were content to stay within the Anglican Settlement as well (i.e. Perkins and Sibbes).

Elizabeth died in 1603 with no children, and her rightful heir was James VI of Scotland/ James I of England (he held both monarchies at the same time; his great grandmother was Henry VIII’s sister. Scotland’s church was already Presbyterian at that time (John Knox had founded it in the 1500s) – so Puritans looked with great hope at what would happen with James' ascenscion.

**Puritans Under James**

In 1603 the Puritans submit to him a list of things they want to see reformed: e.g. banishment of Catholic rite of confirmation, which they see as unscriptural, bowing at the name of Jesus during worship (unscriptural). Scotland he had to submit to the session of a local church – he needed the episcopacy to secure his authority (to include divine right notions). Wanted preaching ministers in every church instead of just reading the Book of Common Prayer. Lastly, the Puritans wanted to replace the episcopal system of church government with a presbyterian one.

1604 – Hampton Court Conference– King James hears grievances (many Puritans in House of Commons) (this was big – first public demand for reform), none of which he granted, but did establish a project to produce the KJV bible. The same year he had the archbishop, Richard Bancroft, approve a series of canons that episcopacy was an institution of divine origin. So the Puritans were mostly let down by James, except for the commissioning of the KJV Bible, which is a masterwork of English language and a faithful translation of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. (Even that was a let down, they had to work with establishment and even Arminians to work on the translation).

**Charles I**

James died and his son, Charles I came to the throne. Under Charles, Puritan reform suffered a setback

He had married a Roman Catholic, the sister of King Louis XIII of France, so he was sympathetic to a lot of Catholic teaching.

There was also a growing Arminian presence in the Church of England, that challenged the theology of Calvinism, but also emphasized more ceremonial worship, use of the sacraments, and a high view of clerical vocation – which looked to many like a Romish drift (the Arminians had contempt for the Reformation).

William Laud (1633 – Archbishop of Canterbury) – Openly was an Arminian and often suspected of being a Catholic, Laud was the great enemy of Puritanism in England during this time. Ordered death warrants and orders of mutilation against Puritans. His signature phrase was “harry them out of the land” - a policy that resulted in the Great Migration, much of which was to America, which we will discuss in a few minutes. A man very close to Charles I and easily inflamed by silly disputes, one modern historian has called him “the greatest calamity ever visited upon the English church.” He was also very touchy about being very short. Maybe that had something to do with his foul temper.

What follows during the middle of the 1600s is a complex series of events that led to a war between Parliament and the King – Parliament became more and more heavily Puritan, and when they won, the Charles was tried and beheaded and we don’t have time to discuss that, so just know that Charles continually dismissed and reconvened Parliament many times to try and deal with a rebellion in Scotland – eventually the House of Commons, which was heavily Puritan, was able to.

**Westminster Assembly**

One major event in the story of puritanism occurred near the outbreak of the English Civil War. Throughout the English Civil War (1642-1648), under the direction of Parliament, over one hundred Puritan leaders assembled at Westminster Abbey to draft a new confession of faith for the national Church. Although they generally agreed on Calvinistic theology, differences arose between the majority who advocated a national Presbyterian Church, and a small but vocal minority of Independents, led by Thomas Goodwin, who argued for the right of congregations to govern themselves.

They finally reached a compromise that advocated the voluntary formation of congregational presbyteries throughout the country. The Church of Scotland immediately approved the Westminster Confession upon its completion in 1647, followed by Congregationalists in New England in 1648. A decade later, English Congregationalists meeting in London adopted the Westminster Confession in their Savoy Declaration (1658) with only minor modifications on church government.

**Oliver Cromwell**

The period from 1649 to 1660 is know as the interregnum, or “time between reigns” during which England functioned like a republic with the leading general of Parliament’s army, Oliver Cromwell at the helm as Lord Protector (refused to take the crown). Cromwell was a Puritan and set to a program of reformation in church and state – granting greater religious toleration – but he died in 1658 and Charles II, son of Charles I (beheaded) was invited to take the throne to restore order.

**Charles II**

With Charles II came a return to the episcopacy structure for the church and a return to the *Book of Common Prayer.* He picked up where his dad had left off, trying to harry all of the Puritans that had multiplied like rabbits during the interregnum, out of England. (later on his deathbed, Charles II would declare himself a Catholic).

He passed a law that every minister must agree to the every word of the *Book of Common Prayer* by St. Bartholomew’s Day 1662 or you must resign your pulpit. On the 24th of August, 2000 of the 6000 pastors in England resigned (a third) at great economic risk, could not be around people they pastored.

This is known as the “Great Ejection” and was a real blow to three denominations that had been growing in the freedom of the interregnum, the Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians – these ejected pastors began to spread these churches illegally throughout England.

This in many ways is the end of the Puritan period, because they were kicked out of the churches, no longer to purify them but to plant new churches. Also useful to note that between 1662 and the 1870s, you could not be educated at Cambridge or Oxford if you objected to the *Book of Common Prayer*, so 1662 is the end of Puritan formal education. Not until 1688 when religious toleration was granted in England – William and Mary (James II tried to restore Catholicism).

**Puritans in America**

By early 1600s (end of Elizabeth, start of James) many Puritans saw little hope for reforming the Church of England, so they began to look elsewhere to establish their own model a purely Protestant, reformed Christian community. They wanted it serve as a model, so it had to be far enough away for freedom, but close enough to be observed. The solution was North America.

Mention *Wall St. Journal* piece: The Desolate Wilderness, piece written in the 1600s based on the records of the Plymouth Colony Governor William Bradford, printed every year since 1961:

The next day they went on board, and their friends with them, where truly doleful was the sight of that sad and mournful parting, to hear what sighs and sobs and prayers did sound amongst them; what tears did gush from every eye, and pithy speeches pierced each other's heart, that sundry of the strangers that stood on the Key as spectators could not refrain from tears. But the tide (which stays for no man) calling them away, that were thus loath to depart, their Reverend Pastor, falling down on his knees, and they all with him, with watery cheeks commended them with the most fervent prayers unto the Lord and His blessing; and then with mutual embraces and many tears they took their leaves one of another, which proved to be the last leave to many of them.

In 1628 The first to go created the Massachusetts Bay Company, and took their charter with them to establish its headquarters in America, to avoid English interference.

Sailed on the *Arbella*, led by John Winthrop (who would serve as governor for most of the first two decades):

*[READ] Winthrop described himself and his people as “a company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ.” And while he believed that “the Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among us as His own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways,” Winthrop also invoked divine judgment on himself and his fellow Christians should they break their covenant with God.*

*“…we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.”*

They did not seek a break with the Church of England – still members of that Church – just to be a model. And this was not some American hubris or arrogance – it was a humble mission – note that they recognized that though they hoped to be a light to the world, if they were not faithful to God, he would remove his blessing and they would fail. The Great Migration: 10,000 Puritans fled during Laud’s reign in the 1630s.

**Pilgrims**

The Pilgrims were different from the Purtians because they were separatists, they did not seek to reform the Church of England, or to be a model for it, they sought to be independent, to separate from it. They had originally left England for Netherlands around 1608 but, dissatisfied, set sail for America on the Mayflower, landing in 1620 at Plymouth. So this settlement actually predated Winthrop and the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

They wound up north of their intended landing spot with the Virginia Company of London (Jamestown in 1608 was the first permanent English settlement in North America). Meanwhile other Puritans spread out – Thomas Hooker founded Hartford, Connecticut in 1636 and John Davenport founded New Haven in 1638. Yet with the interregnum in the 1650s many Puritans moved back to England, but then the Restoration period sent many back to America.

**Covenant & Half-Way Covenant**

Central to the Puritan vision for the church and the Christian life was the covenant. Churches, families, government, and society were organized around the idea of covenant.

Think of a covenant as an agreement – for the individual, one is saved because God gives Christ’s righteousness as atonement for your sin, and you in turn have faith in God (now this is a covenant of grace, because God also gives faith). And God of course is faithful not to break the covenant. The church consists of individual Christians who covenant together to serve God.

The Puritans' idea was this: God makes a covenant with nations when they glorify him – so if disaster strikes, then it was a warning that people were not living up to their covenant obligations – so they would call on everyone to fast and repent. So you can see how this covenant view envisions a society that is holistically Christian, where both secular and sacred life are tied together in a sacred covenant between the people and with God.

So a practical outworking of this: the Puritan meeting house was in the center of town and where the church gathered and the community conducted business.

The entry point into this covenant society was infant baptism – through baptism you became a member of the church, and therefore qualified to participate in government and vote. This worked without a problem in the first generation because most Puritans were converted Christians – but this changed over time.

**Half-Way Covenant**

Baptism was understood as a seal of the covenant of grace – but in the second generation, many who were baptized were not stepping up to profess Christ. Then ***they*** had children, so the Puritans faced a dilemma:

* + - * 1. They wanted to keep the church membership as truly converted Christians
        2. Also wanted to maintain the church influence over the people and society

Solution: Half-Way Covenant (1662) which allowed children of unconverted members of the church to still be baptized, but not take the Lord’s supper – a half-way membership that preserved the interlocking system of individual, church, and society.

Unfortunately, this also reveals how quickly the Puritan community was compromising with the world.

Another mark of this drift from Puritan principles was that they founded Harvard in 1636 to educate ministers but by 1701 they founded Yale because Harvard had drifted so far from Puritan principles.

So by 1700 in America, Puritanism had died as a reform movement, but in its evangelical piety, it would live on – which we will talk about next week.

**Puritan Writings**

If you have read anything by the Puritans, you know they can be a bit difficult at times to read. When they wrote about something they really wrote about it. What I mean is, when they wrote about a subject, you would think after reading a few pages that surely he is about done talking about this. And then they begin again, looking at it from a slightly different angle. And they do it again and again.

What they do is take an idea and treat it like a precious gem, and they stare at it, the way the light is refracted through it, and then after an exhaustive examination, they turn it just ever so slightly, and repeat the process.

So reading the Puritans is a meditative practice. If you are anything like me, rifling through books as fast as possible, then the Puritans can be very frustrating. But that’s why I should be reading them, why you should be reading them. To slow down, and meditate on the glory of God, on his complexities and mercies and magnificence – to contemplate and be patient – to focus on quality and not quantity. Many of them were written as sermons, so try reading them out loud (but not at Starbucks).

Not all are sermons, the most famous is John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* which is a story. Bunyan was a Baptist and a tinkerer that repaired pots. But he was also a gifted preacher – Charles II once heard Bunyan preaching and asked John Owen (himself an Oxford-educated professor) why everyone went to hear a tinkerer preach. Owen replied, *“Sire, I would give all my learning to be able to preach one sermon like that man.”*

**Other great Puritan writings**

John Owen: Mortification of Sin

Richard Baxter: A Call to the Unconverted: *“Our telling you of your misery is not to make you miserable, but to drive you out to seek for mercy. It is you who have brought this death on yourselves. We tell you also of another death, [one] even remediless, and much greater torment that will fall on those who will not be converted.”*

Valley of Vision: A modern collection of Purtian prayers, organized and categorized according to type.

Richard Sibbes: Known among his contemporaries as “The Sweet Dropper,” Puritan pastor reknowned for his preaching. The Bruised Reed. The book centers around the third verse in Isaiah 42. It reads, "A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth." Breaking that verse down, Sibbes does a masterful job of comforting and encouraging Christians in their walk with Christ.  I love this book, for a long time I kept it in my jacket pocket and just read it when I had some time on the Metro or whatever. Really lives up to its reputation.

A lot of their writings were forgotten during the centuries after them, MLJ does a very important work in the 20th century helping to start the Banner of Truth trust, which became a very important repository and publishing house for many Puritan writings.

**Puritan Spirituality and Theology**

J.I. Packer suggests six areas in which the Puritans can instruct us today.

* + 1. “integration of their daily lives”: Everything they thought, said and did was seen as sacred, all facets of life for the Glory of God
    2. “the quality of their spiritual experience”: They constantly meditated on Scripture and on the Lord, and engaged in intense self-examination in light of these truths
    3. “passion for effective action”: Packer writes, *“They were men of action in the pure Reformed mold – crusading activists without a jot of self-reliance; workers for God who depended utterly on God to work in and through them, and who always gave God the praise for anything they did that in retrospect seemed to them to have been right.”*
    4. “program for family stability”: Love and commitment between husband and wife & passion and devotion to the development of their children
    5. “sense of human worth”: Every humans dignity because they are created in the image of God
    6. “ideal of church renewal”: Always sought God’s reforming and reviving work through the local church

Packer summarizes: *“Puritanism was essentially a movement for church reform, pastoral renewal and evangelism, and spiritual revival; and in addition…it was a world-view, a total Christian philosophy.”*

**Conclude with three final notes**

(1) Sovereignty of God: Fire reformed faith, they disagreed over church governance but not over the absolute sovereignty of God – the covenant was established by God, not a contract that we can break, but one unilaterally established and maintained by God

(2) Heart & Head: They did not see the heart and head as separate, just as they did not see any parts of the Christian life as separate – their knowledge of God stirred their love and passion for God and vice versa

(3) Pastoral Theology: They were doctors of the soul, caring well for Christians by examining the condition of each one’s soul and asking tough questions about their lives and if their were signs of the God’s grace and renewal in their lives.

These men, though flawed as are all, are excellent models for us in their zeal for Scripture, understanding of the Gospel, and commitment to thoroughly reforming their lives and the life of the church – all to the glory of God.

**Close With a Prayer from Valley of Vision**

O Lord God, without the pardon of my sin I cannot rest satisfied  
  
without the renovation of my nature by grace I can never rest easy,  
  
without the hopes of heaven I can never be at peace.  
  
All this I have in thy Son Jesus; blessed be his name.

**Excerpts From Puritan Writings:**

*“Every sin strikes at the honor of God, the being of God, the glory of God, the heart of Christ, the joy of the Spirit, and the peace of a man’s conscience.*

*Therefore a soul truly penitent strikes at all sin, hates all sin, conflicts with all sin, and will labour to draw strength from a crucified Christ to crucify all sin.”*

–Thomas Brooks, “Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices,” The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks, Volume 1, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol; James Nisbet and Co.; G. Herbert, 1866), 33.

*“Why should we fear death, that is but a passage to Christ?*

*It is but a grim sergeant that lets us into a glorious palace, that strikes off our bolts, that takes off our rags, that we may be clothed with better robes, that ends all our misery, and is the beginning of all our happiness.*

*Why should we therefore be afraid of death? it is but a departure to a better condition? It is but as Jordan to the children of Israel, by which they passed to Canaan. It is but as the Red Sea by which they were going that way.*

*Therefore we have no reason to fear death. Of itself it is an enemy indeed, but now it is harmless, nay, now it is become a friend, amicable to us, a sweet friend.*

*It is one part of the church’s jointure, death. ‘All things are yours,’ saith the apostle, Paul and Apollos, ‘life and death,’ 1 Cor. 3:22.*

*Death is ours and for our good. It doth us more good than all the friends we have in the world.*

*It determines and ends all our misery and sin; and it is the suburbs of heaven. It lets us into those joys above.”*

–Richard Sibbes, “Christ is Best,” in The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, Volume 1, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol; James Nisbet and Co.; W. Robertson, 1862), 340.

“*God reserves the best for the last. God’s last works are His best works. The new heaven and the new earth are the best. The second wine that Christ created Himself was the best. Spiritual things are better than natural things.*

*A Christian’s last is his best. God will have it so, for the comfort of Christians, that every day they live, they may think, my best is behind, my best is to come, that every day they rise, they may think, I am nearer to heaven one day than I was before, I am nearer death, and therefore nearer to Christ.*

*What a solace is this to a gracious heart! A Christian is a happy man in his life, but happier in his death, because then he goes to Christ, but happiest of all in heaven, for then He is with Christ.”*

–Richard Sibbes, “Christ is Best,’ in The Works of Richard Sibbes, Vol. 1 (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1634/1973), 341.

*“There is mercy and never-failing compassion in God, so that though my own present condition be full of darkness, and I see no deliverance, yet I purpose still to abide waiting on Him. Who knows what those infinite stores and treasures of mercy and relief that are with Him may at length afford unto me?”*

–John Owen, Temptation and Sin in The Works of John Owen, ed. William Goold, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnson & Hunter; 1850-1855; reprint by Banner of Truth, 1966), Vol. 6:417-418.

*“CHR. Sir, said Christian, I am a man that am come from the City of Destruction, and am going to the Mount Zion; and I was told by the man that stands at the gate, at the head of this way, that if I called here, you would show me excellent things, such as would be a help to me in my journey.*

*INTER. Then said the Interpreter, Come in; I will show thee that which will be profitable to thee. So He commanded His man to light the candle, and bid Christian follow Him: so He had him into a private room, and bid His man open a door; the which when he had done, Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it.*

*It had eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his 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.*

*CHR. Then said Christian, What meaneth this?*

*INTER. The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand; he can beget children (1 Cor. 4:15), travail in birth with children (Gal. 4:19), and nurse them himself when they are born. And whereas thou seest him with his eyes lift up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth writ on his lips, it is to show thee, that his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest him stand as if he pleaded with men; and whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him, and that a crown hangs over his head, that is to show thee that slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his Master’s service, he is sure in the world that comes next to have glory for his reward.*

*Now, said the Interpreter, I have showed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going, hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way; wherefore, take good heed to what I have showed thee, and bear well in thy mind what thou hast seen, lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right, but their way goes down to death.”*

–John Bunyan, The Pilgrim’s Progress in The Works of John Bunyan (London: Blackie and Son, Paternoster Row, 1862), 3:98.

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| **1509** | Henry VIII becomes king of England |
| **1526** | William Tyndale's English New Testament published |
| **1534** | Henry VIII leads Parliament in break with Roman Catholic Church and becomes 'supreme head of the Church of England" |
| **1535** | Thomas Cartwright is born (d. 1603) |
| **1545** | Council of Trent (ends 1563) |
| **1547** | Edward VI becomes king and advances Protestantism |
| **1549** | First version of Book of Common Prayer published |
| **1553** | Mary Tudor becomes queen and labors to reestablish Roman Catholicism; nearly 300 Protestants are martyred during her reign, including Thomas Cranmer |
| **1558** | Elizabeth inherits throne and restores Anglicanism |
| **1558** | William Perkins is born (d. 1602) |
| **1559** | Act of Uniformity requires use of Book of Common Prayer for public worship; final edition of Calvin's *Institutes* Published |
| **1567** | Controversy over clerical vestments is symptom of Puritans' desire for further reformation |
| **1570** | Puritan leader Thomas Cartwright deprived of teaching post at Cambridge for criticizing Anglican liturgy and government |
| **1571** | Parliament approves *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* stating doctrinal beliefs of English church |
| **1576** | Elizabeth instructs Archbishop Grindal to crack down on 'prophesyings', Grindal refuses |
| **1577** | Richard Sibbes is born (d. 1635) |
| **1583** | John Whitgift becomes Archbishop of Canterbury and enforces uniformity in public worship |
| **1588** | England's navy defeats the Spanish Armada |
| **1593** | Act Against the Puritans |
| **1599** | Oliver Cromwell is born |
| **1602** | Death of William Perkins |
| **1603** | James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England |
| **1604** | James I rejects most Puritan requests for reform included in their "Millenary Petition" |
| **1605** | Gundpowder Plot |
| **1608** | John Milton is born |
| **1611** | King James Version published |
| **1616** | Richard Baxter and john Owen are born; William Shakespeare dies |
| **1618** | James I advocates Sunday recreation in opposition to Puritan Sabbatarianism - "Book of Sports" |
| **1618** | Synod of Dort (ends 1619) |
| **1618** | Thirty Years War begins in central Europe |
| **1620** | The "Pilgrims," Puritan Separatists who had fled to the Netherlands, sail to America and found colony at Plymouth, Massachusetts |
| **1625** | Charles I becomes king |
| **1628** | Oliver Cromwell becomes Member of Parliament |
| **1628** | John Bunyan is born |
| **1633** | William Laud appointed Archbishop of Canterbury; "Great Migration" of Puritans to New England |
| **1637** | William Prynne (1600-1669) persecuted for non-conformity |
| **1638** | Scotland signs National Covenant affirming Reformed faith |
| **1641** | The House of Commons presents Charles I with Grand Remonstrance |
| **1641** | Richard Baxter becomes pastor in Kidderminster |
| **1642** | English Civil War begins; most Puritans side with Parliament against King Charles I |
| **1643** | Parliament calls assembly of Puritan leaders, who produce Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and Directory of Worship (ends 1649) |
| **1645** | Archbishop William Laud executed by Puritan-run Parliament |
| **1645** | Charles I defeated by Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentary army |
| **1646** | George Fox founds the Quaker movement |
| **1647** | John Owen's The Death of Death in the Death of Christ espouses limited atonement |
| **1649** | Charles I is beheaded by Parliament; Commonwealth begins under leadership of Oliver Cromwell |
| **1649** | Cromwell massacres 3,500 Irishmen at Drogheda |
| **1653** | Cromwell becomes England's "Lord Protector," dissolves Parliament, and advances Puritan objectives |
| **1656** | Richard Baxter publishes The Reformed Pastor |
| **1658** | Death of Oliver Cromwell on September 3 |
| **1660** | Parliament restores the monarchy; Charles II becomes king |
| **1660** | Richard Baxter moves to London and is appointed chaplain to Charles II |
| **1662** | Act of Uniformity passed and 2,000 clergy, including Richard Baxter, ejected from parishes |
| **1662** | Richard Baxter marries Margaret Charlton |
| **1665** | Great Plague kills nearly 70,000 in London |
| **1665** | Five Mile Act forbids nonconformists from coming within five miles of former parishes or corporate towns |
| **1667** | John Milton's Paradise Lost published |
| **1672** | Declaration of Indulgence pardons some imprisoned nonconformists |
| **1674** | Death of John Milton |
| **1678** | John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress published |
| **1681** | Death of Margaret Baxter, wife of Richard Baxter |
| **1683** | Death of John Owen |
| **1685** | Charles's Catholic brother James II takes throne; persecution of nonconformists intensifies |
| **1685** | Richard Baxter imprisoned until November 1686 |
| **1688** | Glorious Revolution: William and Mary become king and queen of England |
| **1688** | Death of John Bunyan |
| **1689** | Puritans regain freedom of worship through Act of Toleration |
| **1691** | Death of Richard Baxter on December 8 |