

Richard Baxter and the English Puritans: Did You Know?

Interesting and unusual facts about the English Puritans.

Compiled by Jennifer Trafton and Leland Ryken

The Name No One Wanted

The surest way to conjure up images of repression, joylessness, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy is to call something or someone "Puritan." Twentieth-century poet Kenneth Hare wrote, "The Puritan through Life's sweet garden goes/To pluck the thorn and cast away the rose." The Puritans themselves were used to such scorn. From its very first use in early 1560s, "Puritan" was a term of abuse, implying a "holier than thou" attitude on the part of those who were so called—a claim to superior saintliness. The Puritans, at least at first, detested the title. Richard Baxter said, "I am neither as good nor as happy" as the name suggested. They preferred to call themselves "the godly," "the faithful," or "God's elect." But in the sense that this was a movement of people who wanted to *purify* the church in accordance with Scripture, it was an apt nickname.

Home Is Where the Art Is

Though the Puritans have gained an unaesthetic reputation for banishing paintings and musical instruments from churches, closing theaters, etc., they were not—contrary to popular opinion—hostile to the arts themselves. Puritans associated art in churches with Catholicism, but they bought art for their homes. They objected to theaters, which had become centers of prostitution and dissipation in their day, but they did not necessarily object to dramatic art—John Milton wrote a masque, *Comus*, for private performance. Oliver Cromwell owned an organ, and he hired an orchestra and held dancing at his daughter's wedding.

What's Love Got to Do with It?

Anglican treatises on marriage listed procreation as the primary purpose of marriage, followed by restraint and remedy of sin, and finally companionship. The Puritans reversed the order, putting mutual society, help, and comfort in first place.

Daniel Rogers wrote, "Husbands and wives should be as two sweet friends, bred under one constellation, tempered by an influence from heaven whereof neither can give any reason, save mercy and providence first made them so, and then made their match; saying, see, God hath determined us out of this vast world for each other." In direct contrast to the medieval Catholic glorification of celibacy, the Puritans placed a very high value on marriage, sex, and family—as long as they occurred in that order!

Merry Christmas? Happy Holidays? Neither One

When Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector of England, he canceled Christmas—prompting modern naysayers to cry, "Humbug!" But it wasn't a Scrooge-like hatred of joyous festivities that prompted the Puritans to distrust carols, mistletoe, and decorated trees. Christmas, like the rest of the saints' days and festivals in the Catholic/Anglican calendar, was in their view not only unnecessary and unbiblical, it also diminished the specialness of the one day of every week Scripture did set apart

for Christians to celebrate God's work in Christ: the Sabbath. As Richard Greenham explained, "Our Easter day, our Ascension day, our Whitsuntide is every Lord's Day."

The Puritans were not averse to devoting certain days to spiritual activities on occasion. They were fond of calling their own private thanksgiving days, to which they invited family members, neighbors, and the local pastor. According to his diary, Puritan pastor Thomas Heywood attended several dozen such thanksgiving days per year.

Faith in a Nutshell

The Puritans perfected the art of pithy definitions and aphorisms. Here are a few examples:

"Theology is the science of living blessedly forever" (William Perkins).

"Theology is the doctrine of living for God" (William Ames).

Faith is "a persuasion of my heart that God hath given his son for me, and that he is mine, and I his" (Thomas Cartwright).

"In the Word preached the saints hear Christ's voice; in the sacrament they have his kiss" (Thomas Watson).

"Christ dying for us, is our Redemption; Christ dwelling and living in us, is our Reformation" (William Dell).

"The soul of religion is the practical part" (John Bunyan).

Forget Superbowl Sunday

The Puritans took Sabbath observance very seriously. When King James I threw down the gauntlet by publishing the Book of Sports—a list of the sports and games one could lawfully engage in after church—the controversy that followed was so volatile that a 17th-century historian cited it as one of the leading causes of the English Civil War.

The Puritans did value recreation—just not on Sunday. On other days of the week, they enjoyed hunting, a form of football, fishing, bowling, swimming, skating, archery, and any other amusement they did not deem immoral (such as gambling or horseracing). In fact, some Puritan leaders urged employers to give their workers time for play and exercise during the week, so that Sunday could truly be a day of rest for both spirit and body.

"Purified" Worship

The Puritan critique of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer was well established by the time the Westminster Assembly began its deliberations in 1643. In addition to offensive requirements for clerical dress, the Prayer Book service was considered too Roman Catholic in its ceremonies, too long to allow sufficient time for preaching, too earthly-minded in its prayers, and too rigid in its structure. When they finally had a chance to reform the Prayer Book, the Puritans crafted a set of guidelines, known as "The Directory for the Publick Worship of God," rather than a set form of service. Although it was never officially approved in England, many Puritan pastors followed its guidelines voluntarily (see p. 21 for an example of an order of service). —**Contributed by Michael Lawrence**

A Peek Inside a Puritan's Palm Pilot

Someone once said to the Puritan preacher Richard Rogers, "Mr. Rogers, I like you and your company very well, but you are so precise." He replied, "O Sir, I serve a precise God." With strict self-discipline, the Puritans sought to regulate their daily lives so that every thought and action served and glorified God. One young Puritan woman was said to "order her soul first, and then all other things were set in the exactest order." Here is what a Puritan's typical day might have looked like:

- Rise at 5 a.m. for private prayer, Bible study, and meditation, followed by family worship
- Family worship, including prayer, Bible reading, and the singing of a Psalm
- Throughout the day, hours were set aside for secular employment, reading books, periods of private prayer, instruction of children and servants, conversation with Christians and nonbelievers, and acts of charity
- Mealtimes were occasions for spiritual conversation and godly conduct; Puritans asked themselves, "Did I eat, drink, for the glory of God?"
- Family worship again in the evening, this time with discussion and questioning
- Self-examination and prayer before bed

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A Man. A Magazine. A Crème Egg.

Jennifer Trafton

I've been thinking a lot about Richard Baxter, *Christian History & Biography*, and chocolate. Richard Baxter for obvious reasons. The first time I ever heard his name was when my roommate in seminary had to read his book *The Reformed Pastor* for her pastoral counseling class—and kept raving about it. A 17th-century book as assigned reading for 20th-century pastors? After learning more about him during the editing of this issue, I am beginning to understand.

"With so many Puritans to choose from, why turn the spotlight on Richard Baxter?" we asked J. I. Packer, who speaks of the great 17th-century preacher as familiarly as if they had grown up down the street from each other. Many reasons: Baxter lived through so much of the Puritan era—from 1616 to 1691. He wrote what by many standards is the best record of it, from a personal standpoint, in his autobiography. He was one of the top Puritan leaders of his day, the most successful Puritan pastor, and the most prolific Puritan writer. From him it is not a far leap into the wide spectrum of opinions, personalities, and experiences that make up English Puritanism as a whole, including one of its abiding characteristics: the belief that all real theology is practical theology. This issue of *CH&B* is not only about a certain group of people who longed, but in many ways failed, to change their world. It is about a certain kind of theology lived out in ministry, in the discipline of daily life, in the family, in secular vocations, and in the larger society. The Puritans were certainly not without their faults. But as Dr. Packer told us, in all of their diversity and adversity, their triumphs and setbacks, two very deep concerns emerge: how to be *holy* and how to be *human*.

And the Puritans' convictions about Christian vocation and the God-giveness of all of life have made me think about this magazine staff and the little things that make a workplace a space of sacred encounters and spiritual significance. As our art director of 14 years, Rai Whitlock, has been struggling with illness (and we've been struggling with his absence), we have been grateful to benefit from the excellent creative skills of freelance designer David LaPlaca. We have also had the pleasure of welcoming a new assistant editor to the *CH&B* team. Rebecca Golossanov brings a passion for church history, a healthy dose of cross-cultural sensitivity (she is a Virginian married to a Russian), and a keen eye for grammatical gaffes and factual goofs. Her background in visual communication and art history ideally suits her for the very important task of picture research—digging through 2000 years of art, artifacts, maps, and photos to find those choice examples that will help us take you on a visual journey through the heritage of the church.

And I've been thinking about chocolate because being forced to hang around Elesha Coffman's delicious "Story Behind" article for the past month has robbed me of any qualms about drowning pre-deadline jitters in the sweet products of Christian charity. I seem to be more human than holy these days. But after all, I asked for it (the article, that is). And Elesha, being a senior editor of this magazine and well acquainted with its many joys and challenges, should know the feeling.

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Living History

Oldest church discovered, Christian history in the movies, rare book by Roger Williams

Chris Armstrong

Oldest church discovered?

In seminary, we learned that the Roman Christians didn't start erecting public church buildings until after Constantine legalized their faith in 313 A.D. As a result, almost all evidence from the first three centuries of the church has come to us in the form of manuscripts, not architecture or furnishings. Now archaeologists have uncovered a building in the northern Israeli city of Megiddo, near the biblical site of Armageddon, that challenges the conventional wisdom.

Imagine the scene. Prisoner Ramil Razilo, serving two years for traffic violations, is carefully removing rubble in a last-minute archaeological test dig before destroying the ground to expand their prison. Suddenly, his shovel hits the edge of an elaborate mosaic. As workers uncover first the tiled floor, then remnants of a table, and then a set of Greek inscriptions, signs increasingly indicate that this is the first pre-Constantinian church ever discovered.

No important antiquities discovery seems to go undebated, however. Evidence favoring the early date include the fish symbol, used by persecuted Christians; some older potsherds; the style of Greek writing in the inscriptions; the geometric patterns used in the mosaics; and the style of the building itself.

Among those scholars arguing against the conclusion that this as a pre-Constantinian church is Joe Zias, anthropologist and ex-curator with the Israel Antiquities Authority. Though Zias believes the building may date back to the third century, he suspects it was converted to a church later. For one thing, one of the inscriptions names a Roman officer as a benefactor. "If I were a Roman soldier in the third century," said Zias, "I certainly wouldn't want my name on [a church].) This would not have been a good career move. In fact, it sounds like the kiss of death."

(Our thanks to CTI staffer Rich Tatum, who gathered much of the above information on his blog: Google "blogrodent and Megiddo" for more.)

On the big screen

A new crop of feature films draws from Christian history for story material and hopefully will draw viewers to dig into their history books to learn more.

Fifty years ago, five young missionaries flew into a remote jungle in Ecuador and were killed by the Waorani tribe, then called the "Auca" Indians. In the years that followed, members of the tribe converted to Christianity and repudiated their violent ways. Just released in theaters, *End of the Spear* tells the story from the viewpoint of the Waorani. The studio (Every Tribe Entertainment) has also made available on DVD its award-winning documentary [Beyond the Gates of Splendor](#). For a historian's commentary on the events that inspired the film, see Long and Nystrom's article, "Martyrs to the Spear," on p. 43 of this issue.

Another upcoming film, ***Amazing Grace***, currently being shot by Walden Media (the company that partnered with Disney to produce [The Chronicles of Narnia](#)), will tell the story of hymnwriter/abolitionist John Newton and his protégé William Wilberforce, who campaigned for three decades to end the slave trade in England. [See **CH&B** Issue 81 on Newton and Issue 53 on Wilberforce.]

Also drawing from Christian history is Martin Scorsese's next movie: an adaptation of Shusaku Endo's [Silence](#). The novel follows a pair of 17th-century Portuguese missionaries into Japan, where preaching Christianity was punishable by death.

Centuries-old banned book resurfaces

"Forced religion stinks in the nostrils of God." Saved from the flames of religious repression over 350 years ago, a rare first edition of the revolutionary book bearing these words recently resurfaced.

In 1644 Roger Williams, original theorist of the separation of church and state, traveled to London to print his classic call for religious toleration, [The Bloody Tenent of Persecution](#). Parliament ordered copies of the book burned, but Williams saved some and brought them back to Rhode Island.

This August, when Phoebe Simpson, a librarian at the Rhode Island Historical Society, opened some other historical writings on a shelf with rare books, she discovered one of the few 1644 editions of ***Bloody Tenent*** that remain (only five other copies of this edition are known to exist). "I just broke out in goose bumps," Simpson said in an interview. "It was the pure excitement of touching something that Roger Williams touched."

Williams came to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1631. A man ahead of his time, he interpreted the bloody religious strife of 16th- and 17th-century Europe as a warning from God against mixing religion and politics. After he extended this disestablishmentarian critique to the colony itself, he was banished and forced to seek refuge in the wilderness. There, he purchased a tract of land from the Native Americans and founded Rhode Island.

Two museums link Asian Christians to the West

A great task lies ahead for all Christians: to move toward mutual understanding across the global church's many cultures. Today, two museums are playing their roles in linking Asian and Western Christians.

The Korean Christian Museum at Soongsil University in Seoul, South Korea, is the first museum in that country to tell the story of how Christianity vitalized Korean culture after it officially reached the peninsula around the 17th century. Among the sculptures, books, and other artifacts is a copy of John Bunyan's [Pilgrim's Progress](#) translated into Korean in the 19th century. The museum also holds a large collection of relics brought in through China between the 7th and 8th centuries, including a 7th-century Nestorian stone cross excavated in Gyeongju.

Meanwhile, in North Chatham, Massachusetts, another museum draws Japanese "pilgrims." These visitors come to the Chatham Historical Society's Atwood House Museum to remember a sea captain who was instrumental in helping a young Japanese man reach America in 1865. Captain Horace Taylor brought young Shimeta Neesima to America aboard his ship, the *Wild Rover*, represented in a painting at the museum. Neesima was one of the first Japanese to escape the country during its years as a closed society. Receiving a sought-after Christian education in America, Neesima was eventually ordained as a Congregational minister at Mount Vernon Church in Boston and then returned to Japan to found, in 1875, one of its first Western-style universities, Doshisha University in Kyoto. Today, Neesima is remembered as one of Japan's greatest Christian leaders.

Take a virtual catacomb-crawl

If your travel budget doesn't currently allow for a trip to Rome to walk the tunnels of the catacombs and visit the basilicas of the early Roman Christians, two visual and informational feasts can give you a sense of being there. First, check out www.catacombe.roma.it. The site, created by Roman Catholics, includes many photographs and brief, clear explanations of the history, symbolism, and spirituality of the catacombs.

Second, you can browse the glossy pages and unique "overlay" format of Philippe Pergola's compact, spiral-bound [Christian Rome: Past and Present: Early Christian Rome Catacombs and Basilicas](#) (Oxford University Press/Getty Trust Publications, 2002). As the introduction proclaims, "The oldest concrete evidence concerning the Roman martyrs and the early Roman Christians is preserved in eloquent abundance in the Roman catacombs." The book also shows, through overlay transparencies, how a number of the catacombs and basilicas have been restored through the centuries.

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Sweet Charity

The Quakers behind Cadbury chocolate

Elesha Coffman

Crème eggs and milk chocolate bars might seem like the height of decadence, but, believe it or not, some of the world's leading confectioners got into the candy business to promote healthy living. The Cadburys, for example, filled their sweets with dreams of social progress and Christian compassion.

Victorian Britain, home to John Cadbury and his sons Richard and George, had serious problems. Industrial workers, including mothers and children, spent their days in dirty, dangerous factories and their nights in cramped tenements. Widespread alcoholism deepened the workers' poverty and contributed to domestic violence. While the Salvation Army attacked these ills with "soup, soap, and salvation," the Cadburys fought back with cocoa.

The Cadburys belonged to the Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers. As dissenters from the Church of England, they were closed out of the country's Anglican-allied universities, and as pacifists, they would not serve in the military. So they became entrepreneurs.

In 1831 John opened a shop near the center of gritty Birmingham, selling coffee and tea wholesome alternatives to harder drinks. He soon added cocoa to his product list, powdering it himself with a mortar and pestle. In 1861 he retired and ceded control of operations to his two oldest sons. By 1878 the business had grown to employ 200 workers. It was time to build a larger facility.

The brothers purchased land in the countryside near Birmingham and dubbed the site Bournville. They intended to build not only a state-of-the-art factory, but a village as well, to enable their employees to escape the dingy city. The village featured modest cottages with gardens, spacious public parks, swimming pools, and, eventually, shops, schools, and churches. All Bournville lacked was a pub, a concession to the founders' convictions about alcohol.

The Cadburys sought to make work life pleasant, too. The factory complex featured such avante garde amenities as heated dressing rooms, a kitchen, and cricket fields. Days began with Bible study, and continuing education classes took place in the evenings. The brothers periodically circulated among the workers, listening for good ideas and occasionally performing odd jobs. One worker recalled, "To see Mr. George and Mr. Richard go down on their knees and crawl under a table to see if the water pipes were hot enough made a great impression on all of us."

In addition to good business sense, Christian conviction drove much of this innovation. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, had insisted that all people possessed an "inner light," which linked them to God and accorded them equal stature with each other. Influenced by this principle, the Cadburys board governed by consensus, and company committees included representatives from all levels of the organization. The bright cottages and continuing education opportunities likewise aimed to elevate workers' dignity.

The enlightened chocolatiers were not without their critics. Trade unionists and socialists derided the Cadburys for giving their workers just enough money and power to keep them in their place. Other observers sneered at the paternalism of Mr. George and Mr. Richard, who would, for example, dismiss a female employee with a Bible, a rose, and a small monetary gift when she was about to marry. They did

not believe wives should work.

Despite these gripes, the Cadburys enjoyed the affection of hundreds of loyal workers and excited the admiration of many other late Victorian industrialists. Upon George's death in 1922, more than 16,000 mourners paid their respects at the Bournville "factory in a garden."

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Physicians of the Soul

J. I. Packer discusses the English Puritans, their quest for holiness, and why they are still worth remembering.

Though J. I. Packer has earned the nickname "The Last Puritan," his many decades of Puritan-focused scholarship, teaching, and writing have helped to create a new generation of Puritan protégées. His 1990 book, [A Quest for Godliness](#), has been especially influential. As he recounts in his "Changed Lives" article in this issue (p. 50), Dr. Packer also owes a deep personal debt to the Puritans. Currently Board of Governors Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, Dr. Packer spoke with Christian History & Biography recently about the nature of Puritanism and its continuing legacy.

What kind of movement was Puritanism?

Puritanism in England was a holiness movement—seeking holiness in church, family, and community, as well as in personal life. It started around 1564 when certain clergy began campaigning for more holiness in the Prayer Book liturgy of the Church of England. They complained that the Book of Common Prayer still contained "Romish rags" and offensive rituals. Other concerns soon surfaced, and it became clear that Puritanism was at heart a movement to raise standards of Christian life in England, with the conversion of England as the final goal.

It wasn't that the Puritan clergy or the members of Parliament who supported them set out to create a party. It was rather that a party of like-minded people emerged. Puritan clergy gathered laypeople around them. They found the most support in the towns, where there were godly people who were prepared to take seriously the fact that Bible religion was something they were not very good at and needed to become better at. And the movement swelled, developed, and became a constituency.

In the 1580s William Perkins began producing little books on personal religion that became the headwaters of a flood by 1640. Puritan pastors insisted that part of being a good Christian was to read Puritan devotional books, and so a common literature bound the constituency together.

What did the perfect church and the perfect society look like to the Puritans? What was their dream?

Their dream was holiness in their own lives and in the lives of those around them. The Puritans didn't talk about the "state"; they simply talked about conducting all of life in a way that honored God and respected other people. That was their idea of community. The perfect church was a church containing families that practiced holiness and worshipped with a purged liturgy under the leadership of a minister who was a powerful preacher of the Bible.

The Puritans hoped that England would one day be converted. As a Christian country, it would be the paragon of a truly godly nation that would become the envy of the rest of the world. People would line up and say, "Please tell us what your secret is, please tell us how we can become like you." The Puritan clergy and the lay-people who followed them were impressed by the fact that in England there had never been a war over religion—which was not the case anywhere else where the Reformation had gone. That was a marvelous gift of God to England. The sense that England had a unique mission was reinforced by the ruin of the Spanish Armada. God had fought for England. That meant that God had a special vocation for England.

This shaped the prayers of the Puritans from that time on. They believed that doing everything they could to advance the kingdom of God in England was tremendously important for the welfare of the world. When Oliver Cromwell invited the Jews to settle in England, it was because he believed that the day was coming when the world would be blessed through the conversion of the Jews. It would be part of the fulfillment of England's vocation. Looking back on the Cromwell era, Richard Baxter wrote that there never was a time in recorded memory when the word of God brought so many people to faith as during those years, and if the Commonwealth conditions had continued for a quarter of a century more, England would have become a kingdom of saints and a wonder of the world.

That's what they all wanted. Because of the Restoration of the monarchy and the ejections of Puritan ministers in 1662, it never happened. But they did extraordinarily well considering how much was stacked against them from the start.

Why did some Puritans leave England to go to continental Europe or the New World, while others stayed?

Those who left England mostly did so under a cloud. James I, a Presbyterian, came down from Scotland to be king of England in 1603. He had said of the nonconforming Puritans—the Puritans who wouldn't use the bits of the Prayer Book that they didn't like—that they would have to conform or he would "harry them out of the land, or else do worse." Puritans knew that they were back in a similar situation to Christians in the Roman Empire in the second century A.D. They were practicing religion in a way that involved technical lawbreaking. There was no police force, of course, but every local magistrate had his own posse of soldiers whom he would send out to arrest the nonconforming clergymen and would then report them to the bishop, who was the disciplinarian for each diocese.

Some Puritans decided they could conform under protest and sufferance, simply stressing that they didn't like these rituals. They didn't believe they sinned in using them. But other Puritans did.

I think it's fair to say that the people who left England were the clergy and laity who felt most strongly about the inadequacies of religion in England. The Prayer Book offended them because these ceremonies were still in there. The clergy, knowing that James I thought that conformity to Prayer Book order was very important, felt themselves to be under threat from the authorities if they stepped out of line. So they had a new idea: If they started a colony in the New World, New England would be out of reach of the restrictive powers that were crippling them in old England, and so they could realize their ideal of the godly community and be a beacon for the world. England's vocation under God was stirring their minds, but they had given up hope of achieving it at home.

Those who stayed in England believed that patient suffering under pressure was part of the Christian vocation, and they were prepared to do that. The majority of these Puritan clergy became lecturers—people hired by a parish to preach sermons once a week (usually on Thursday) to make up for the fact that the rector who took services in church on Sundays wasn't a preaching man. The Puritans believed that the Word is the prime means of grace, so it was important to have lecturers where no good preaching was going on.

What key ideas characterized the Puritan view of the Christian life?

Everybody is a sinner, and the Puritans spent a lot of time and energy establishing that fact. God in his grace has sent his Son to save us through his death, which is the basis of our justification. Now he gives a covenant promise to those who have faith. Faith is committing yourself to the God of the promises, and specifically to Jesus Christ the living Lord. You become his penitent, obedient disciple.

As a Christian, you must believe that you are accepted through Christ, you are adopted into God's family, you are an heir of glory, and you are now a pilgrim on the way to heaven. Every day of your life must be reshaped. That's discipleship. The Puritans made good use of the category of "duty," meaning simply what

is due to God from us who by his grace have been saved from sin. The Puritans were very strong on moral teaching, but they weren't legalists: Duty is done out of gratitude to the God who has saved you. This is sanctification, and it required that you put not only your personal life but your family life in order. The Puritans had a clear idea of God-fearing family life and a very strong and humane doctrine of marriage as a partnership in the Lord.

When it came to Christian character, the Puritans stressed humility before God, submission to Scripture, and integrity—that is, honesty, truth telling, being a man or a woman of your word—in all relationships. You should also be a philanthropist, generous in giving to the poor.

The Puritans insisted on keeping the Sabbath holy. This meant that from the time you get up in the morning to the time you go to bed at night, you should be doing things that honor God and nourish the soul. Baxter says that for the godly, Sabbaths are joyful days—there's nothing else that they'd rather be doing.

The Puritans were robust in their view of life. To be a Puritan was to look forward to the glory that is to come and to prepare for a good death—that would be the last act of a life of good and faithful discipleship.

The Puritans called themselves "physicians of the soul." What did they mean by this?

A physician's business is to check, restore, and maintain the health of those who commit themselves to his care. In the same way, the minister should get to know the people in his church and encourage them to consult him as their soul-doctor. If there is any kind of spiritual problem, uncertainty, bewilderment, or distress, they are to go to the minister and tell him, and the minister needs to know enough to give them health-giving advice. That's the Puritan ideal.

Just as a physician must know physiology, the Christian minister must know what spiritual health is. It's pure knowledge of the will of God, the true gospel of God. It's regular praise and regular prayer. It's acceptance of responsibility in the family, in the church, and in the larger community where you do business. That's spiritual health. And falling short of that calls for intervention, rebuke, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

Puritans believed that an educated conscience is absolutely necessary to spiritual health. This meant knowing the moral requirements of God so that your conscience supports you when you are doing right and condemns you when you are doing wrong.

Did this emphasis foster a special relationship between a Puritan pastor and his congregation?

Yes. Of course, this varied from clergyman to clergyman. Richard Baxter leads the pack here. Baxter said that, just as you go to your physician for a check-up from time to time, so you should go regularly to your pastor for a spiritual check-up. And you should always be ready to hear humbling guidance, direction, redirection about the Christian life. Counseling people for spiritual diseases was a distinctive Puritan emphasis, and it indicates the closeness of commitment to the flock which the Puritan pastor thought ideal. I don't think that their mastery of this field of spiritual ministry, with all the principles of correction taken from Scripture itself, has ever been surpassed.

What false stereotypes do people have about the Puritans?

H. L. Mencken once said, "Puritanism is the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy." That is nonsense. The Puritans were in fact pleasant people, cheerful people. Many of them had a teasing wit and the capacity to laugh and make others laugh. It's not the case, either, that all of them dressed in black and made themselves stand out as if they were going to a funeral. John Owen, when he was Oxford's vice-chancellor, was much criticized for being a natty dresser!

How were the Puritans innovative?

They introduced the Christian Sabbath to England. They also introduced the Christian family to England, in the sense that they thoroughly worked out the responsibilities of father and mother inside the home, the pattern for family prayers twice a day, how everybody should be taught the Bible and taught to pray on their own, both adults and kids. Thus they took the idea of the godly home further than it had ever been taken before.

They also devised a style of preaching that England had never experienced before. It was expository, but it was plain and searching, whereas the preaching of Anglican divines was more often than not a way of showing off their learning. Here is what the Puritans did best—preaching the Bible, preaching the gospel.

What aspects of the modern world or modern Christianity have their roots in the Puritan movement?

Ever since the Puritan era ended, people in the West have been trying to ensure that we don't slip back into anything that would recall the Puritans. But the idea of the Christian family as American evangelicals maintain it in some form of family religion, family prayers and the responsibility of the father as the spiritual leader—this was a Puritan ideal. Also, the Western ideal, on both sides of the Atlantic, of integrity in public life is something which the Puritans established and which we still hope for, because we know it's right. When moral lapses take place, we think it scandalous. That is a Puritan reaction.

Until the mid-19th century, nearly every serious Christian read Puritan literature. Since then, it seems that the Puritans have fallen into disrepute. Why?

In the middle of the 19th century, a great deal of new devotional literature began to be produced, and it was quite simply easier to buy and read those little books than the large, antiquated Puritan volumes. Evangelical piety had become more superficial and simplistic than had been the case before. Puritans were fairly demanding. The only bit of the Puritan literary heritage that went on being printed, sold, and read was Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which is an amazing piece of work. It's brilliant from a literary as well as from a spiritual standpoint.

From the middle of the 19th century on, popular devotion became man-centered, and the Puritan way of being God-centered (doxological) has been marginalized. The Puritans wrote about the challenges of living to God in a conflicted age like ours, in which there are spiritual battles to be fought. They were thorough in their Christianity in a way that few since their time have matched.

But there has been a modern resurgence of interest in the Puritans. Their books have become available again and have found a public. Seminaries have courses on Puritan theology and devotion. In its own way, Puritanism is now once again quite a power in the evangelical world. Christians have become disenchanted with the sort of devotional literature that was abroad when I was a young believer. They want something with more backbone.

Reformed enough?

Many aspects of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer came under criticism from Puritans from the late 16th century onwards. All Puritans agreed that four ceremonial requirements in particular were unbiblical and revealed lingering Catholic influence:

Vestments. Clergy were required to wear a white surplice during public worship. The Puritans objected that these vestments were too associated with the Catholic priesthood in the minds of laypeople. A special uniform implied that the clergy were holier and closer to God than other people, thus denying the priesthood of all believers.

Kneeling at the communion table. The Prayer Book required communicants to kneel as they received the bread and wine. But the Puritans argued that this invited people to believe in transubstantiation—the Roman Catholic doctrine that the substance of the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ—and to venerate the elements. The Puritans preferred to sit at a table and pass the bread and wine to each other, as it was done in Reformed churches in other countries.

The sign of the cross in baptism. According to Prayer Book specifications, the priest poured water on the head of the child being baptized and then made the sign of the cross on the child's forehead. The Puritans believed that the essence of baptism was the water symbolizing new life in Christ; the sign of the cross was an unbiblical human addition.

Wedding rings. In pre-Reformation days, marriage was regarded as a sacrament; the ring given by the bridegroom to the bride was the outward and visible sign of this invisible grace. According to the Anglican Articles, marriage was not a sacrament but a human partnership blessed by God. A ring, said the Puritans, was thus unnecessary.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 89: Richard Baxter & the English Puritans

The English Puritans: Christian History Timeline

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'

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

1559 Act of Uniformity requires use of Book of Common Prayer for public worship

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

1583 John Whitgift becomes Archbishop of Canterbury and enforces uniformity in public worship

1588 England's navy defeats the Spanish Armada

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"

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
- 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
- 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
- 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

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 89: Richard Baxter & the English Puritans

A Pen in God's Hand

Richard Baxter wrote, preached, taught, and visited his way to become the model pastor.

Paul C. H. Lim

The Prototypical Evangelical? Historians David Bebbington, Mark Noll, and George Rawlyk have identified four characteristic marks of "evangelicalism": a stress on conversion, a focus on Christ's redeeming work as the core of biblical Christianity, an acknowledgment of the Bible as the supreme authority, and an energetic and personal approach to social engagement and evangelism. According to Paul Lim, the life and ministry of Richard Baxter reveal all four of these qualities. Read more about this remarkable man.

On July 28, 1875, the town of Kidderminster in the English Midlands witnessed a rare moment of Christian unity. After over 200 years of deep Protestant divisions, clergy from all denominations came together for the unveiling and dedication of the statue of a Puritan preacher.

The inscription at the base of the statue read, "Between the years 1641 and 1660 this town was the scene of the labors of Richard Baxter, renowned equally for his Christian learning and his pastoral fidelity. In a stormy and divided age he advocated unity and comprehension, pointing the way to everlasting rest."

Baxter himself would have been pleased by the ecumenical spirit of the event. Refusing to be boxed into any party or sect, he called himself a "mere Christian"—a phrase that would influence C. S. Lewis centuries later—and spent his life trying to persuade his fellow Protestants to reconcile their doctrinal and political differences and work together towards holiness. "In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity" was his motto.

By age 44, he was the most famous clergyman in England, known for completely transforming the town of Kidderminster and fostering cooperation between clergy. By his death in 1691 he had written over 130 books selling more copies than any other English writer of the time. This voluminous outpouring of pastoral and theological commentary earned him the nickname "scribbling Dick." Preaching and writing to awaken dulled consciences, comfort the afflicted, and point people to the rest found only in Christ, he was a hero for many Puritans.

When George Whitefield visited Kidderminster 50 years after Baxter's death, he commented, "I was greatly refreshed to find what a sweet savour of good Mr. Baxter's doctrine, works and discipline remained unto this day." And the legacy continues. Baxter's bestseller [*The Saints' Everlasting Rest*](#) is a classic in devotional literature. His autobiography remains one of the most trusted historical sources for understanding the religious and political culture of 17th-century England. His handbook for pastoral ministry, [*The Reformed Pastor*](#), influenced preachers like Charles and John Wesley and Charles Haddon Spurgeon—who had his wife read it aloud on Sunday evenings to "quicken my sluggish heart."

A Shropshire lad

Richard Baxter was born on November 12, 1616, the only child of a landowner in Shropshire, England. His hometown of Rowton was spiritually sleepy and in need of what Patrick Collinson calls "a hotter sort

of Protestants." The 80-year-old pastor never preached. Baxter was confirmed at age 15 without ever being asked to recite the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, or the Ten Commandments. Already winds of discontent were stirring that would provide the stormy religious background to the English Civil War. James I had just decreed that popular games could be played on Sundays, and Baxter recalled how after church the sounds of uproarious dancing around a maypole and the loud music of the tabor and pipe outside the window disrupted the family's devotions.

"Many times my mind was inclined to be among them," he wrote, "and sometimes I broke loose from conscience and joined with them; and the more I did it the more I was inclined to it. But when I heard them call my father Puritan it did much to cure me and alienate me from them; for I considered that my father's exercise of reading the Scripture was better than theirs, and would surely be better thought on by all men at the last; and I considered what it was for that he and others were thus derided."

Richard Baxter, Sr., had been converted through reading the Bible and tried to pass his love for Scripture on to his son. When the young Baxter realized that it was for practices such as "reading Scripture" when the rest of the town "were dancing on the Lord's Day" that people like his father were reviled, he became convinced that "godly people were the best, and those that despised them and lived in sin and pleasure were a malignant, unhappy sort of people."

As a teenager he read several Puritan devotional books that opened his eyes to the love of God and taught him how to live by faith in Christ. Though his formal education was poor and he was persuaded not to attend university, he acquired a massive amount of learning through his own reading. "And the use that God made of Books, above Ministers, to the benefit of my Soul, made me somewhat excessively in love with good Books"—an apt comment for someone whose personal library numbered 1,400 volumes by the time he died, an impressive collection that included first editions of many Latin and Greek Fathers, as well as medieval Scholastics and Jesuit theologies.

The true meaning of reformation

Already beset by the illnesses that would plague him for the rest of his life, Baxter decided to make the best of what he thought was his short time left on earth. He was ordained at age 23, and after a short stint as a schoolmaster and a year as pastoral assistant in Bridgnorth, Baxter accepted a call to be "lecturer" in the parish of St. Mary's in the small weaving town of Kidderminster.

Shortly after Baxter arrived in Kidderminster, the English Civil War erupted, and he spent five years as a chaplain in Oliver Cromwell's army, hoping to bring a voice of moderation into the struggle. But he was troubled by what he saw. Like his fellow Puritans, Baxter believed that the church in England was in desperate need of reform in order to make it more like Calvin's Geneva, which the Scottish reformer John Knox called "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on the earth since the days of the Apostles." But he could not agree with those who would tear apart the unity of the church by separating from it, or who ignored the fact that reformed faith also meant holiness of life.

When he returned to Kidderminster in 1647—this time as vicar—he brought a new understanding of reformation, later expressed in *The Reformed Pastor*: "Alas! Can we think that the reformation is wrought, when we cast out a few ceremonies, and changed some vestures, and gestures, and forms! Oh no, sirs! It is the converting and saving of souls that is our business. That is the chiefest part of reformation, that doth most good, and tendeth most to the salvation of the people."

Conversion is the key

The Reformed Pastor, published in 1656, was the culmination of Baxter's thinking about the ministerial role and the product of an enormously successful ministry in Kidderminster. Baxter believed

that a true church was not composed of a mostly absent bishop and thousands of parishioners who preferred to pursue trivial pleasures rather than following the "plain man's pathway to heaven." Nor was it made up of a "society of friends" like the Quakers, who eliminated the office of pastor. A true church was both a hospital and a school, and healing and learning could only come through truth rightly taught and embodied. In that regard, the pastor, both as a role model for others and also as a shepherd and teacher, was absolutely crucial.

The pastor must be "awakened" and reformed himself—thoroughly converted, humble, and obedient—before he could awaken others. The goal of preaching was to exalt Christ by confirming, convicting, and comforting the faithful and by converting the rest. Baxter urged his fellow pastors to preach "with clear demonstrations of love to their souls, and make them feel through the whole, that you aim at nothing but their salvation," so that "the increase of the purity and the unity of his churches" could be manifested.

Baxter himself preached twice a week, for an hour on Sunday and another hour on Thursday, and his preaching was characterized by enormous energy and urgency. "What!" he wrote, "Speak coldly for God and for men's salvation! ... such a work as preaching ... should be done with all our might, that the people can feel us preach when they hear us."

The personal touch

But preaching was not enough—a more hands-on strategy was needed to awaken sleeping souls. As a pastor, Baxter believed that conversion could happen at any age, and that the most effective way of finding out whether a person needed to be converted was **not** by public preaching but by private conversation. He would spend an hour with each family, using the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments to instruct each person and gauge his or her spiritual condition. Every Monday and Thursday Baxter would start at one end of town, his assistant would start at the other, and together they managed to interview 15 or 16 families a week—a total of 800 families (the whole parish) each year.

Baxter discovered that some people learned more in an hour's conversation than in ten years of preaching. He became convinced that personal instruction, or catechizing, was essential to insure the salvation of parishioners and thus the reformation of the parish. It also helped people better understand his sermons and enabled him to know who was ready to take the sacraments and where loving discipline was needed.

As a result of Baxter's one-on-one catechizing, he got to know his parishioners so well that he adapted his pastoral care to their widely varying spiritual states and needs. Rather than simply dividing people into "godly" and "ungodly," he claimed that there were 12 different categories of people in his parish—including those who merely conformed to the externals of church membership, those who desired to live godly lives but did not yet understand the fundamentals of faith, those with skeptical tendencies, those who rebelled against their pastor, and those whose wrong-headed theology was leading them into lawlessness.

Thanks to his intimate knowledge of his flock, most of Kidderminster's 2,000 adult inhabitants were converted under Baxter's ministry, and this town formerly infamous for its ignorance and debauchery became a model Christian community.

His program for reform and unity did not stop with Kidderminster. From his weekly fellowship with neighboring clergy grew the Worcestershire Association, an interdenominational alliance of Anglican, Presbyterians, Congregationalist, and Baptist ministers dedicated to Baxter's ideals of evangelistic preaching and catechizing families. The fervor spread to other counties as well.

Baxter also wrote 47 books during his Kidderminster years, including a compilation of his sermons titled ***A Call to the Unconverted***. It sold over 30,000 copies in its first printing, went through 23 editions before 1700, and was translated into French, Swedish, German, and Dutch—as well as into Algonquian by John Eliot, the pioneer missionary to the Native Americans whose ministry Baxter praised highly.

Richard Baxter was soon a role model for Puritan pastors everywhere.

A wider parish

After the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Baxter emerged as the leader among conservative Puritans and with them was ejected from his pulpit (see p. 38). But for Baxter this was an opportunity to embrace all of England as his "parish," since by then he was one of the most sought-after writers of the day. Living in or near London, he published another 87 books, ranging from a defense of nonconformity to pleas for church unity, from a highly complex systematic theology to a huge compendium of Christian ethics. He was one of the first Protestants to produce a paraphrase of the New Testament, which aimed for "plainness and brevity" and included both doctrinal notes for younger scholars and ministers and practical notes for use at the "family altar."

Because books had played a key role in his own Christian growth, he promoted the kind of reading that instructs and nurtures. He donated a number of books to the fledgling Harvard College, although in a letter to a colleague, Baxter wrote that he would rather his books be "carried on peddler's backpacks" than kept in "learned men's libraries." He knew that while the poor were the very ones who could reap the most spiritual benefit from his writings, they could not afford the cost of books. So he arranged with his publisher that he would receive every tenth copy printed in lieu of royalties—copies he then distributed free. He also spent a good portion of his income buying Bibles for the poor.

Heavenly minded for earthly good

Despite his success as a pastor, a writer, and a leader, Baxter's life was not without its share of afflictions and setbacks. Ironically, his personality was not as suited to peacemaking as his convictions were. The same passion and straight-talking honesty that made him such an effective pastor often ended up causing insult and division in other spheres. A teacher by nature, Baxter could never seem to take off his schoolmaster's hat when relating to his peers. His long speeches before the bishops at the Savoy Conference—a failed attempt to revise the Prayer Book according to Puritan standards—only served to bore his listeners.

His lifelong striving for a peaceful middle ground meant that he was often misunderstood by people at both ends of the spectrum. He endured two prison sentences and caught flak from some Puritans for advocating "occasional conformity"—attending weekly service at the local Anglican church and sometimes celebrating the Eucharist, sometimes not. He also fumbled theologically by coming up with his own doctrine of justification which he believed avoided the extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism. His contemporaries observed, however, that it came dangerously close to "justification by works." For his high-church persecutors, he was too Puritan. For some of his fellow nonconformists, he was not Puritan enough.

Frequently believing himself at death's door because of his many illnesses, Baxter overcame disappointing circumstances by meditating on the heavenly reality to come. In ***The Saints' Everlasting Rest***, he showed how reflecting upon the "excellency and certainty" of heaven could anchor and shape one's earthly sojourn. One particular paragraph from his ***Dying Thoughts on Philipians 1:23*** captures Baxter's philosophy:

My Lord, I have nothing to do in this World, but to seek and serve thee; I have nothing to do

with a Heart and its affections, but to breathe after thee. I have nothing to do with my **Tongue** and **Pen**, but to speak to thee, and for thee, and to publish thy Glory and thy Will. What have I to do with all my Reputation, and Interest in my Friends, but to increase thy Church, and propagate thy holy Truth and Service? What have I to do with my remaining **Time**, even these last and languishing hours, but to look up unto thee, and wait for thy Grace, and thy Salvation?

Baxter lived until age 76, considerably longer than he had expected. He died December 8, 1691, two years after the Act of Toleration put an end to persecution and guaranteed freedom of worship for Puritans. The huge funeral procession, attended by people of all ranks and including Anglicans as well as nonconformists, foreshadowed another ecumenical gathering nearly 200 years later at the unveiling of the Baxter statue in Kidderminster.

But such public accolades would not have been to Baxter's taste. In his funeral sermon, William Bates recalled the famous Puritan leader's characteristic humility: When a friend was "comforting him with the remembrance of the good many had received by his preaching and Writings, he said, ***I was but a Pen in God's hand, and what praise is due to a Pen?***"

Paul C. H. Lim is associate professor of historical and systematic theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Reaching the Kidderminster Kids

by Craig A. Smith

In the preface of his book ***Compassionate Counsel to All Young Men***, Baxter confessed that "in the place where God most blessed my labours at Kidderminster, my first and greatest success was upon the youth." Baxter had a threefold strategy for reaching the young people.

First, Baxter started the equivalent of a youth group. No social events! Just three hours together once a week on Saturday evening in various homes to pray and to prepare themselves for the following Lord's Day.

Second, he taught the kids through weekly family conferences. He spoke first to the children, whom he then sent out of the room while he addressed the adults. His approach was direct, discussing matters of their salvation. His method, which he outlined in his book ***The Catechising of Families***, was prescriptive, believing that everyone needs to be taught what they are, from where they are, for what purpose they have been made, and what means must be used to attain this goal. Baxter focused on the family because he saw its role as a school or church, to train up a succession of people to follow God's calling for their good and the good of the community.

Third, he dedicated one of his Thursday lectures every month to speak to the youth and those who educated them because he judged that "the work of educating youth aright [was] one half of the great business of man's life."

So important was reaching the young people to Baxter that he concluded: "There is no man that ever understood the interest of mankind, of families, cities, kingdoms, churches, and of Jesus Christ the King and Saviour, but he must needs know that the right instruction, education, and sanctification of youth, is of unspeakable consequence to them all."

Craig A. Smith, lecturer in New Testament at Trinity College, Bristol

Sunday Morning with the Puritans

by Michael Lawrence

Devised by the Westminster Assembly in 1643, "The Directory for the Publick Worship of God" was the Puritans' attempt to reform the Prayer Book liturgy, and many pastors followed its guidelines. Had the Puritans printed church bulletins, one might have looked something like this.

Call to Worship

Many churchgoers used Sunday not only to worship, but to chat with friends and neighbors, conduct business, or catch up on sleep. Thus the Directory exhorts the people "wholly to attend upon [the publick worship] ... forbearing to read [other things] ... and abstaining from all private whisperings, conferences ... as also from all gazing, sleeping and other indecent behavior."

Prayer of Invocation, Praise and Illumination

Old Testament Reading: Haggai 2

Singing of a Psalm

New Testament Reading: Hebrews 12

Ignorance of the Bible was a deep concern of the Puritans. "[T]hat the people may be better acquainted with the whole body of the scriptures" they read "one chapter of each Testament ... at every meeting."

Prayer of Confession and Petition

Sermon: "Christ above Moses" (Heb. 12:25-29)

This was the centerpiece of Puritan worship. Puritan pastors were typically given one or even two turns of the hourglass. And as today, a good preacher could draw large crowds, not only from his own village but from distant towns.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Application

Unlike the Book of Common Prayer, which provided set forms that the priest and people recited, the Directory simply indicated the subjects to be addressed in prayer. The minister could then either write his own prayers or pray extemporaneously.

The Lord's Prayer

Singing of a Psalm

Puritans sang only Psalms—no hymns—and without instrumental accompaniment. But don't imagine a boring monotone. It was said you could hear a Puritan church before you saw it, both because of the singing and the vocal agreement in prayer.

Benediction

Announcements:

Catechism class will meet this afternoon at 2 p.m. at the pastor's house.

The church dogwhipper requests that you please assist him in his duties by keeping the churchyard gate shut, as curs, sows, and geese are unseemly in the publick worship.

Michael Lawrence, Associate Pastor of Capital Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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The Puritan Moses

Believing he was on a mission from God, Oliver Cromwell became both military genius and lawgiver.

Collin Hansen

Oliver Cromwell died in 1658 after an attack of "malaria" followed by a bout with a kidney infection. But his enemies didn't consider such a death good enough for the man who led England through its period of Puritan dominance. Two years after Cromwell's death, Parliament restored Charles II to the throne, and royalists exhumed Cromwell's body from Westminster Abbey, hanged it, cut off its head and put it on a pole at Westminster Hall.

Richard Baxter later reflected, "Never man was higher extolled, and never man was baselier reported and vilified than he." Cromwell's fighting men adored him, and Puritan giants like John Owen and John Milton backed him. Yet history largely reviles him. Foreign leaders feared and admired him. But the English public loathed many of the reforms he endorsed. He deposed a king and dabbled with republican ideas far ahead of their time. Still, he ruled with an iron fist and gained infamy for ruthlessly butchering Irish rebels. The great Puritan leader embodies the contradictions of these remarkable years.

Charles in charge

Cromwell was born in 1599, four years before Queen Elizabeth died. His family, like most Puritans, wholeheartedly supported the queen as she projected English power against the hated Spanish Catholics. The queen, however, did not support the Puritans' relentless efforts to finish the Reformation, purge the church of incompetent clergy, and remove high-church elements from the Book of Common Prayer.

James I, who succeeded Elizabeth in 1603, clashed with the Puritans who composed an influential minority in Parliament over his foreign policy, especially his failure to give enough aid to Protestants fighting the Thirty Years War on the continent. He also thumbed his nose at the Puritans' observance of the Sabbath by publishing the Book of Sports, which allowed games on Sunday after church.

Yet no ruler attracted Puritan ire like James's son Charles I. Charles married a Catholic in 1625 and enjoyed Anglican ceremonialism. Parliament and the ambitious, unyielding new king immediately jostled for power. Charles led Britain into costly wars in mainland Europe and later an ill-fated campaign against the Scots after they rebelled against his efforts to impose the Book of Common Prayer. Parliament retaliated against Charles by refusing to fund his wars. Charles tried to avoid the problem by not calling a Parliament from 1629 to 1640.

The king picked a fight with the Puritans in particular when he appointed William Laud archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. The notorious Laud imposed Catholic forms of worship, advocated Arminian theology, and forced Puritan ministers to read the Book of Sports from their pulpits. His ruthless suppression of opponents three protesters had their ears cut off in 1637 prompted many Puritans to leave England for the Netherlands or America.

When Parliament returned in 1640, they tried to ban bishops, whom they saw as agents of the king. Charles stood by his father James's dictum: "No bishops, no king." He fervently guarded the "divine right of kings" to rule with absolute authority.

But republican sentiment was spreading, and Charles could only resist Parliament for so long. He reluctantly allowed them to imprison Laud, whom they eventually executed. When Charles launched one final scheme to suppress Parliament by attempting to seize its leaders in 1641, they sniffed out the plot and escaped. Both sides readied for war.

Cromwell takes the lead

During the war's first year, Parliament's armies dominated London and most other major English cities. Their navy cut off Charles from his allies on the continent. To offset his opponents' advantages, Charles negotiated with the Scots and offered to limit his monarchy and impose their Presbyterian state church on England. But the Scots chose to ally with their Calvinist kin in Parliament.

Still, the war did not turn decisively for Parliament until late 1644. Earlier that year, Oliver Cromwell, who had been elected to Parliament in 1628, led a dramatic victory at Marston Moor. Blinded momentarily by the flash of a pistol whose bullet grazed him, Cromwell led his men to the opposite flank where they destroyed a detachment of Charles's Royalist cavalry. Then he led his men toward the center of the Royalist line and wiped out the infantry.

Much to Cromwell's dismay, his leaders did not press the victory. Convinced that political appointees in the military were hampering the war effort, Cromwell advocated the Self-Denying Ordinance, which banned members of Parliament including himself from leading the army.

But the army quickly learned that they could not win without him. He returned before the crucial battle: "Then I saw the enemy draw up and march in gallant order towards us, and we a company of poor ignorant men, to seek how to order our battle) I could not) but smile out to God in praises, in assurance of victory, because God would, by things that are not, bring to naught things that are."

Cromwell seemed born to lead Parliament's cause exceptional military tactician, brave battlefield leader, tremendous organizer and trainer. Around the same time that he had entered Parliament, Cromwell had converted in a classic Puritan way. Declaring himself "chief of sinners" saved only by God's grace, he later explained, "My soul is with the congregation of the firstborn, my body rests in hope, and if here I may honor my God either by doing or by suffering, I shall be most glad."

Cromwell enjoyed entertaining guests with French wine. He loved roast beef and ale, liked singing, and appreciated organ music. He also battled a nasty temper. He deliberated long and hard before making decisions, but once he committed himself, an unshakeable faith in providence cemented his judgment.

Cromwell inspired his army of "Roundheads" to share his religious devotion to Parliament's cause. He insisted on going to battle with men of faith. Cromwell said of his soldiers, "I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than that which you call a gentlemen and is nothing else."

With his army he practiced the same principles of religious freedom (at least among orthodox Protestants) that would later characterize his leadership of the country. Cromwell gushed about his men, "Presbyterians, Independents, all have here the same spirit of faith and prayer) All that believe, have the real unity."

Monarch no more

This unity and mercy did not extend to Charles I. After that decisive battle, the defeated king escaped siege at Oxford and surrendered in June 1646 to the Scots, from whom he hoped for better treatment. By the end of 1647, Charles convinced the Scottish Presbyterians to accept his previous offer of compromise.

Theological kinship gave way to pitched battle as Cromwell moved swiftly to divide the English Royalists from their new allies in the north and captured Charles.

Until this point Cromwell had not decided against monarchy. He believed the country needed decisive, centralized leadership that could enforce religious freedom and other reforms. But Cromwell and Parliament had had enough of Charles's scheming. The king would have to die if they were to rule.

Cromwell called Charles "the hardest-hearted man that lives upon the earth." Just as God had rained judgment on hard-hearted pharaoh in order to free his people, Cromwell believed, he would do the same to Charles.

Parliament's court began trying Charles for high treason on January 1, 1649. He was beheaded by the end of the month. Only 59 of the original 135 commissioners, including Cromwell, signed the death warrant. Although Charles lost his head, Parliament lost the image battle badly. During the trial Charles argued persuasively that there was no law apart from the king. On historical grounds, he was right. But Charles never understood the deadly seriousness of Cromwell and his radical Puritan allies, as Thomas Macaulay later described it: "He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker: but he set his foot on the neck of his king."

Victory with a price

Charles's son solicited Irish help so that he could regain the throne. This only stoked English hatred for the Irish. Eight years earlier, Irish Catholics had massacred between 40,000 and 50,000 English Protestant settlers in Ulster. Many in England interpreted Charles I's slow response as license.

Cromwell beat Charles II to Ireland and led an expedition to suppress the Catholics between the summer of 1649 and the spring of 1650. After his army defeated the Irish detachment at Drogheda, Cromwell ordered his soldiers to kill all the remaining men who could bear arms. Cromwell believed that he was justified in slaughtering "these barbarous wretches" because it was "a righteous judgment of God" and "it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future." But this massacre of nearly 3,500 remains the biggest black mark on his legacy.

It was not long before Cromwell had defeated the Scottish threat as well and subdued the entire British Isles. These stunning successes gradually led him to believe that God had appointed him for a mighty task. The Puritan ideal for Britain was rooted in the theocratic mission of ancient Israel, and Drogheda seemed to resemble some of Joshua and David's greatest victories. As the Puritan Moses, Cromwell assumed de facto leadership of Britain.

The Puritan moment

For the first and last time in English history, the Puritans, though still in the minority, found themselves in a position of cultural power. During the Civil War, Parliament had called 121 Puritan clergymen together to reform Laud's Church of England. The resulting Westminster Confession of Faith conformed church teaching to the Calvinistic theology dominant among English Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians. Other reforms followed.

The tolerant conditions of the new "Commonwealth" allowed nonconformist groups to grow as never before, and Puritans like John Owen held influential public positions. Church leaders nominated a "Parliament of the Saints," which introduced civil marriage, registered births, deaths and wills, provided care for the mentally ill, and heard and answered prisoner complaints. They ended the enforced tithes and even tried, albeit without success, to restrict the death penalty to treason, rebellion, and murder.

Cromwell believed that his government's most significant accomplishment was the broadly orthodox

Protestant state church, which functioned like a Congregationalist oversight body. Some dissenting churches could meet, and local congregations made most decisions. Committees worked to fill Britain's pulpits and schools with quality pastors.

But the Puritan movement was a wide-ranging political and theological coalition, and not every Puritan trusted Cromwell. To Richard Baxter, the religious diversity of Cromwell's New Model Army looked more like anarchy. He had backed the fight against Charles only to limit the monarchy, not to kill the monarch. Internal factions such as the growing divide between the radical republicans and moderate monarchists like Baxter, as well as continuing conflicts over the proper form of church government-hampered Cromwell's leadership.

Cromwell pushed for compromise and stability, but that did not suit his temperament. He called a number of Parliaments, but he could not tolerate their inefficiency. For the rest of his life, Cromwell trusted fewer and fewer men to share the nation's leadership. Eventually he trusted only himself.

Worried that his reforms would not endure, he even considered taking the crown in 1654 and again in 1657 permanently alienating staunch republicans like John Owen. Ideological consistency never captivated Cromwell. He fought against monarchy but he had no problem with dictatorship. He simply wanted modest religious tolerance and fair treatment for his military, and he didn't worry about how he accomplished those goals.

Cromwell settled for the title of Lord Protector and operated much like a king. He taxed Royalists to fund Major Generals, who governed 10 different regions of Britain and guarded against uprising. They also enforced bans on blasphemy, swearing, some dancing, and that Catholic holiday Christmas. Their intrusive control eventually turned public sentiment against Puritan rule.

The dream unravels

Cromwell died on September 3, 1658, but not before he delivered a deathbed address that reads like Jesus' high-priestly prayer. "Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love," Cromwell prayed, "and go on to deliver them) and make the name of Christ glorious in the world."

Cromwell's son Richard assumed the title of Lord Protector, but unlike his father, he led no stunning attacks, nor did he share his father's religious devotion. The Protectorate fell apart quickly. Richard lost control of Parliament, and Charles II sweet-talked his way back into Parliament's good graces. The Puritans never reclaimed their lost power and endured persecution for many decades.

Nevertheless, the Puritan vision for England endured though not in England. Little more than a century later, the same longing for liberty that fueled John Milton and the righteous indignation that burned inside Cromwell conspired to challenge another British king and launched the American experiment.

Collin Hansen is an associate editor of Christianity Today.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 89: Richard Baxter & the English Puritans

Preachers & Poets

"Though dead, by their writings they yet speak."—George Whitefield

William Barker and Leland Ryken

William Perkins (1558-1602)

The C. S. Lewis of the Puritan movement

A 17th-century source describes an incident in the prison ministry of William Perkins: A young felon proceeding to the scaffold looked half dead, "whereupon Master Perkins laboured to cheer up his spirits, and finding him still in an agony, and distress of mind, he said unto him, 'What, man? What is the matter with thee? Art thou afraid of death?'

"'Ah no (said the prisoner, shaking his head) but of a worser thing.'

"'Sayest thou so? (said Master Perkins) Come down again, man, and thou shalt see what God's grace will do to strengthen thee.'

"Whereupon the prisoner coming down, Master Perkins took him by the hand, and made him kneel down with himself ... when that blessed man of God made such an effectual prayer in confession of sins ... as made the prisoner burst out into abundance of tears; and Master Perkins finding that he had brought him low enough, even to hell gates, he proceeded to the second part of his prayer, and therein to show him the Lord Jesus ... stretching forth his blessed hand of mercy ... which he did so sweetly press with such heavenly art ... as made [the prisoner] break into new showers of tears for joy of the inward consolation which he found ... who (the prayer being ended) rose from his knees cheerfully, and went up the ladder again so comforted, and took his death with such patience, and alacrity, as if he actually saw himself delivered from the hell which he feared before, and heaven opened for the receiving of his soul."

This ministry to the condemned in the Cambridge castle jail may reflect Perkins's sudden conversion as an undergraduate at Christ's College. A possibly apocryphal tale says that the worldly student overheard a woman scolding her son, "Hold your tongue, or I will give you to drunken Perkins yonder." His conscience convicted, his life made a sharp turn sometime between 1581 and '84, when he was in his mid-twenties.

Having enrolled at Christ's College in 1577, he gained his B.A. in 1581 and M.A. in 1584, and in that latter year he became both a faculty member of Christ's College and a preacher at Great St. Andrews Church in Cambridge. Preaching in a powerful, resonant voice to both townspeople and students for 18 years until his death at age 44, he had an effective ministry both to an academic audience and to ordinary people. J. I. Packer has referred to Perkins as "the C. S. Lewis of the Puritan movement."

Perkins's writings ranged over topics from predestination to cock-fighting, from witchcraft to equity. Strongly Calvinistic in his theology, his collected writings, totaling over 2,500 pages, reached eight printings between 1608 and 1635 and were translated into half a dozen languages. Packer has termed Perkins "the dominant Puritan theologian for the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign" and the "father-figure," "pioneer," "architect," and "most formative" of the Puritan devotional writers down through Richard Baxter almost a century later. His many works are characterized by a mastery of biblical doctrine and knowledge of people's inner needs, combined with an urgent concern for the salvation of souls.

—W.B.

John Milton (1608-1674)

Blind poet of paradise

Still regarded by most literary scholars as the second-greatest English writer (behind Shakespeare), John Milton was correctly labeled by theologian Augustus Strong as "a Puritan of the Puritans" and the one in whom "the English Reformation finds ... its poetical embodiment and expression."

Milton's Puritanism owed much to an experience that his father had as a teenager growing up in a Catholic home. Milton's father was disinherited and left homewhen he was discovered reading an English Bible in his room. He made sure that his own son did not suffer a similar fate. He sent his child prodigy to a local Christian grammar school called St. Paul's School, located in the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral. At the end of Milton's home street, Bread Street, stood the local parish church, where the Puritan pastor Richard Stock preached twice on Sundays and catechized the neighborhood children on weekday afternoons. The climax of Milton's education was studying at one of the most Puritan of the Cambridge colleges—Christ's College.

The story of Milton's career choice is the story of a young Puritan thwarted by the state church. Theoretically headed for the ministry throughout his college education, Milton would not have been welcome in the Church of England. He himself spoke of having been "church-outed by the prelates." So Milton chose to write Christian poetry as his vocation, because he regarded poetry as being "beside the office of a pulpit" in its inherent dignity and influence on society.

Before Milton wrote his major poems, however, the Civil War occurred. Milton self-consciously laid aside his poetic calling for 20 years to become an important international political figure in the Puritan cause. He became Latin secretary to Oliver Cromwell. He wrote volumes of pole-mical prose defending the regicide of Charles I and articulating the Puritan position on political and ecclesiastical issues.

The chief importance of the 20-year break was that Milton became totally blind midway through the period. His fortitude and submission to God's will as he weathered this trauma are evident in his famous sonnet that begins, "When I consider how my light is spent," and ends with the sentiment, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Following his political career, the blind poet composed his major works—*Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*—all of which embody Christian themes and subject matter. But his lyric poems, especially his sonnets, are as great as his major works.

Late in his life, Milton resided on Bunhill Row, close to Bunhill Fields, the famous cemetery where numerous Puritans are buried (including John Owen and John Bunyan). He was buried in St. Giles Cripplegate Church, which today houses busts of Cromwell and Bunyan in addition to Milton.

Milton died without having realized his vision of a reformed English society but still believing in the ideals of what the Puritans themselves called "the Good Old Cause."

—L.R.

John Owen (1616-1683)

The Calvin of England

In the spring of 1655 there were rumors of a Royalist uprising against the regime of Oliver Cromwell, particularly at Oxford. That university town had been the base for the forces of Charles I, who was

executed in 1649. The Vice Chancellor of the University took charge of the security of the town and county, riding at the head of a cavalry troop, armed with sword and pistol. This was the 39-year-old John Owen, tall and imposing, dressed more like a layman than the clergyman he was. According to a contemporary historian of Oxford University, not particularly friendly to the Puritans, Owen "went cloakless to show off his figure, powdered his hair, and wore large tassels on his bandstrings, pointed ribbons at his knees, Spanish leather boots with large lawn tops, and his hat mostly cock'd."

Although described in dress and action uncharacteristic of a Puritan minister, Owen was nevertheless the outstanding theologian and an ecclesiastical and political leader during the era of the Puritan Commonwealth and Cromwell's Protectorate, 1649-58. Such scholars as J. I. Packer, Peter Toon, and Sinclair B. Ferguson have agreed in calling him "the Calvin of England," "the greatest of the Puritan scholastics," and "**the** theological giant among the Puritans."

His writings have remained in print for more than 350 years, some of his more practical and devotional works being available today in paperback. The 19th-century edition of his works occupied 24 volumes—including his 7-volume commentary on Hebrews and also his great work on the Holy Spirit, said by some to be the first systematic treatment of the Holy Spirit by a Christian theologian. It was John Owen who recommended the manuscript of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* to his publisher, Nathaniel Ponder, thus assuring that this Puritan classic would reach posterity.

Born in 1616, Owen received his B.A. and M.A. from Oxford by 1635 and moved to London when the Civil War broke out in 1642. Serving as vicar of a parish in Essex, he became a frequent preacher to Parliament and eventually a chaplain and spiritual adviser to Cromwell. His first masterpiece was published in 1647, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, setting forth the doctrine of "limited" (that is, definite or particular) atonement.

Richard Baxter took issue with this position and viewed Owen as an unfortunate substitute for the deceased, more moderate Jeremiah Burroughes among the leaders of the Independents or Congregationalists. Nevertheless, after the monarchy was restored and both Baxter and Owen were ejected from their positions, Owen wrote to Baxter in 1667, when the latter was seeking to promote unity among the nonconformists: "Sir, I shall pray that the Lord would guide and prosper you in all studies and endeavors, for the service of Christ in the world, especially in this your desire and study for the introducing of the peace and love promised among them that believe, and do beg your prayers."

—*W.B.*

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

The preaching tinker

Dr. John Owen, who from his Oxford days had connections with many in high places, was once asked by King Charles II why he listened to an uneducated tinker. His reply: "Could I possess the tinker's abilities for preaching, please your Majesty, I would gladly relinquish all my learning." This uneducated tinker/preacher was the Puritan John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which next to the Bible is the best-selling Christian book of all time. Also significant among his 60 books produced during some 30 years of ministry are his other allegory, *The Holy War*, and his autobiographical account of his four-year quest for assurance of salvation, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

Bunyan was born in the village of Elstow, just south of the town of Bedford in central England. His father was a "brasier," a maker and mender of pots and kettles, and the young Bunyan, after a two-and-a-half-year stint in the Parliamentary army as a teenager, would return to Elstow as an apprentice to his father in 1647. With sufficient education to read and write, he benefited from two devotional books that his bride brought as her dowry and became regular in church attendance. Although "a brisk talker on religion," he realized he lacked the personal knowledge of God that he sensed in some poor women

whose conversation he overheard. He finally found peace of soul after an agonizing inner conflict, as described in *Grace Abounding*, and in 1653 joined the nonconformist church in Bedford to which the poor women belonged. By 1657 he was formally set apart to the office of preacher.

As he traveled, pursuing his trade as a tinker, or mender of pots, he used every opportunity to preach—in woods, in barns, on village greens, or in town chapels—and his fame as a preacher spread. He also began to write, showing an energetic style, a command of plain English, and a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

With the restoration of the monarchy, laws against nonconformity were revived, and Bunyan was arrested for preaching without a license. He was imprisoned in the county jail, where he would spend most of the next 12 years. His first wife having died, Bunyan had in 1659 married a second wife, Elizabeth, who cared for his four motherless children and eventually bore him two more. During his lengthy imprisonment she pleaded diligently for his release while he helped to support the family from prison by making long-tagged shoelaces, "many hundred gross of which he sold to the hawkers." His imprisonment did, however, give him more time and incentive to write, and from his cell came most of his great literary works.

Thanks to Charles II's covert intention of favoring Roman Catholics in England, Bunyan was among the nonconformists pardoned in 1672 by virtue of a Declaration of Indulgence. Called to be pastor of the Bedford church, now meeting in the barn of one of its members, he used it as a base for an itinerant ministry so extensive and influential that he became playfully known as "Bishop Bunyan." Imprisoned once again in 1676, he was released after six months, and in 1678 John Owen aided in the publication of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which became an immediate hit and has remained so for more than three centuries.

Best identified as a Particular Baptist of an open sort—one who is Calvinistic in theology, congregational in polity, and adhering to believer's baptism though not requiring immersion for church membership—Bunyan reflects the impact of the Puritan movement upon the lower middle class of 17th-century England. He in turn has become perhaps the most influential of all English Puritans.

—*W.B.*

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 89: Richard Baxter & the English Puritans

The Original Puritan Work Ethic

By valuing all of life in relation to God, Puritans gave sacred significance to every activity.

Leland Ryken

Suffering from poor health all his life, Richard Baxter preached, he said, "as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men." Living daily in the shadow of eternity gave the Puritans a deep appreciation for living every moment on this earth to the fullest for God. "Promise not long life to yourselves," Baxter advised, "but live as those that are always uncertain of another day."

For the Puritans, to "redeem the time" (as Baxter put it) meant to order one's daily life in accordance with godly principles and for maximum effectiveness. One of the Puritans' favorite epithets was **well-ordered**. Their opponents nicknamed them the **disciplinarians**. The Puritans aspired to be worldly saints Christians with earth as their sphere of activity and with heaven as their ultimate hope. Baxter exhorted his readers, "Write upon the doors of thy shop and chamber,) This is the time on which my endless life dependeth."

This approach to life resulted in three vintage Puritan traits: the ideal of the God-centered life, the doctrine of calling or vocation, and the conviction that all of life is God's.

The God-centered life

The Puritans' sense of priorities in life was one of their greatest strengths. Putting God first and valuing everything else in relation to God was a recurrent Puritan theme.

Baxter's parting advice to his parishioners at Kidderminster was to "be sure to maintain a constant delight in God." Preaching before the Houses of Parliament, Cornelius Burges admonished everyone present "to lift up his soul to take hold of God, to be glued and united to him,) to be only his forever."

For the Puritans, the God-centered life meant making the quest for spiritual and moral holiness the great business of life. "In a divine commonwealth," wrote Baxter, "holiness must have the principal honor and encouragement, and a great difference be made between the precious and the vile." Our own culture has conspired to make such holiness seem burdensome, but the Puritans found it an appealing prospect. Ralph Venning, in a book-length treatise on sin, called holiness "the beauty of earth and Heaven, without which we cannot live well on earth, nor shall ever live in Heaven."

Of course, it takes vigilance over one's actions to produce a holy lifestyle. Very tellingly, the Puritans repeatedly used such words as **watching**, **exact walking**, and **mortification** to describe their preferred lifestyle.

In Puritan thinking, the Christian life was a heroic venture, requiring a full quota of energy. "Christianity is not a sedentary profession or employment," wrote Baxter, adding, "Sitting still will lose you heaven, as well as if you run from it." The Puritans were the activists of their day. In a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Oliver Cromwell crossed out the words **wait on** and made his statement read "who **have wrestled with** God for a blessing."

Stressing the God-centered life can lead to an otherworldly withdrawal from everyday earthly life. For the

Puritans, it produced the opposite. Richard Sibbes sounded the keynote: "The life of a Christian is wondrously ruled in this world, by the consideration and meditation of the life of another world." The doctrinal matrix that equipped the Puritans to integrate the two worlds was their thoroughly developed ideas on calling or vocation.

The Puritan doctrine of vocation

The Puritans spoke of two callings a general calling and a particular calling. The general calling is the same for everyone and consists of a call to conversion and godliness. "The general calling," wrote William Perkins, "is the calling of Christianity, which is common to all that live in the church of God.) [It] is that whereby a man is called out of the world to be a child of God."

A particular calling consists of the specific tasks and occupations that God places before a person in the course of daily living. It focuses on, but is not limited to, the work that a person does for a livelihood. Several important corollaries follow from this doctrine of vocation.

Since God is the one who calls people to their work, the worker becomes a steward who serves God. Thomas Manton thus commented that "every creature is God's servant, and hath his work to do wherein to glorify God; some in one calling, some in another."

Secondly, the Puritan view that God calls all workers to their tasks in the world dignifies all legitimate kinds of work. Above all, the Puritan doctrine of vocation sanctifies common work. William Tyndale said that if we look externally "there is difference betwixt washing of dishes, and preaching of the word of God; but as touching to please God, none at all." Baxter explained how this could be: "God looketh not) principally at the external part of the work, but much more to the heart of him that doth it."

The Puritan doctrine of vocation (inherited, we should note, from Luther and later Continental Reformers) integrated life in the world with the spiritual life. The spiritual life was no longer limited to some "sacred" space, nor was it reserved for monks and nuns who had retired from the world. Instead, it is "in your shops" (said Richard Steele in his classic treatise *The Tradesman's Calling*) "where you may most confidently expect the presence and blessing of God."

This view of work as vocation offers more than simply the possibility of serving God in one's daily work. It offers the possibility of serving God through or by means of that work. To work is to serve God. Baxter's exhortation was for workers to "serve the Lord in serving their masters."

There is a moral dimension to work as well. When the Puritans spoke of the rewards of work, they almost automatically paired serving God with serving humanity. "The main end of our lives," wrote Perkins, "is to serve God in the serving of men in the works of our callings."

If daily work is as central to the spiritual life as the Puritan doctrine of vocation asserts, it is no wonder that the Puritans threw themselves with such zest into their work. We need, of course, to draw a distinction between the original Puritan work ethic and the secularized perversion that followed. The original Puritan work ethic was this: "Be laborious and diligent in your callings) ; and if you cheerfully serve [God] in the labour of your hands, with a heavenly and obedient mind, it will be as acceptable to him as if you had spent all that time in more spiritual exercises" (Baxter).

All of life is God's

An additional genius of the Puritans was the skill with which they managed to view all of life as God's. The Puritans lived simultaneously in two worlds. For them, both worlds were equally real, and life was not divided into sacred and secular.

According to Thomas Gouge, Christians should "so spiritualize our hearts and affections that we may have heavenly hearts in earthly employments." "If God be God over us," wrote Peter Bulkeley, "he must be over us in every thing."

It is no wonder, then, that the Puritans saw God in the commonplace. Richard Baxter asked his readers, "Canst not thou think on the several places thou hast lived in and remember that they have each had their several mercies?" John Bunyan asked in the preface to *Grace Abounding*, "Have you forgot) the milkhouse, the stable, the barn, and the like, where God did visit your soul?"

In such a framework, there are no "trivial" events, and all of life is potentially a teachable moment. One Sunday morning when the young Robert Blair had stayed home from church he looked out of the window to see "the sun brightly shining, and a cow with a full udder." Blair remembered that the sun was made to give light and the cow to give milk, which made him realize how little he understood the purpose of his own life. Shortly thereafter, he was converted while listening to a sermon.

There was no place where the Puritans did not find God. They were always open to what Baxter called "a drop of glory" that God might allow to fall upon their souls.

C. S. Lewis wrote enthusiastically of "the beautiful, cheerful integration of [William] Tyndale's world. He utterly denies the medieval distinction between religion and secular life." Such integration is one of the most attractive features of the Puritans. Their goal was an ordered and disciplined daily life that integrated personal piety, corporate life, everyday work, and the worship of God.

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Dos and Don'ts in the Workplace **From Richard Baxter's A Christian Directory**

Choose that employment or calling) in which you may be most serviceable to God. Choose not that in which you may be most rich or honourable in the world.

Be diligent in your callings, and spend no time in idleness, and perform your labours with holy minds, to the glory of God, and in obedience to his commands.

Idleness is a robbing God, who is the Lord of us and all our faculties.

Take pleasure in your work, and then you will not be slothful in it.

This interest of God in your lowest, and hardest, and servilist labour, doth make it honourable and should make it sweet.

The question is, How they use that which they labour so hard for, and save so sparingly. If they use it for God, and charitable uses, there is no man taketh a righter course.

Remember that riches do make it much harder for a man to be saved.

If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul, or to any other), if you refuse this, and then choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward.

You must not desire nor seek to get another's goods or labour for less than it is worth.

You have far more cause to be afraid of prosperity, than of adversity; of riches, than of poverty.

The devil suiteth his temptations to men's daily work and business.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Richard & Margaret

Difficult man + difficult woman = model marriage.

J. William Black

He was 17th-century England's most visible pastor, a prolific, popular, and controversial author, a powerful preacher, married to his parish, passionate for the conversion of souls and for the reformation of England's church. He was a man in a hurry, his days crammed with writing projects, sermon preparation, systematically scheduled meetings with the 800 families from the parish, and whatever other surprises a minister's day might hold.

She was, when she first met him, a superficial and self-centered teenager nearly half his age, from a family of means, who grudgingly accompanied her mother to hear him preach and ended up soundly converted to Christ. Not long after her conversion, she was stricken by "consumption," most likely tuberculosis, and lay for a month close to death. He gathered his inner circle of praying friends. Their prayers for her recovery resulted in a sudden cure that was widely noted as God's gracious intervention in her life.

But for all of his pastoral, preaching, and intellectual gifts, he was a difficult man: irritable and prone to speaking or writing his mind when prudence might respond otherwise. He also suffered constantly from a debilitating array of illnesses, made even worse when we remember that existing medical "treatments" often did more harm than good.

Under his ministry, she deepened into an articulate and sensitive soul, troubled by both the needs of others and her own frustratingly slow progress as a Christian. Childhood traumas resulted in lifelong struggles with irrational fear. She suffered from migraines and was periodically obsessed with worries over her health. Overly fragile with regards to the attitudes and responses of those closest to her, she struggled with forgiveness and "letting it go." As he would later write, "Her understanding ... was higher and clearer than other people's, but, like the treble strings of a lute, strained up to the highest, sweet, but in continual danger."

An Unexpected Match

It was a surprise to nearly everyone when, some years later on September 10, 1662, the 47-year-old Richard Baxter and the 26-year-old Margaret Charlton were wed at a special service presided over by Baxter's friend Samuel Clarke. What is even more surprising is that their marriage of 19 years would be full of such mutual delight and love. Perhaps most surprising of all is that we should today know so much about their life together.

Within a month after Margaret's death in 1681 at the age of 46, Richard turned to writing to work through his sorrow. "Under the power of melting grief," he produced within a few days a character sketch of his beloved, unprecedented for its realism and honesty. It provides an extraordinary glimpse into the marriage of a man and a woman who really loved each other. Richard's *Breviate* ("brief account") **of the Life of Margaret** (1681) is an exceptional piece of grief work that sheds unexpected light into the progress, priorities, and passions of a 17th-century Puritan marriage.

Progress

The dramatic shift in Church of England politics that accompanied Charles II's restoration to the throne forced Richard Baxter from his parish in Kidderminster in 1660, ending one of the most remarkable pastorates in English church history. Distressed to lose their pastor, Margaret and her mother followed Richard to London. They were determined to support his preaching ministry there and, in Margaret's case, to remain close to someone who was becoming for her more than just a spiritual director.

As her pastor, Richard was very much aware of the dynamics that can develop in counseling members of the opposite sex. Concerned to maintain propriety, he wrote several letters to deflect her growing affections towards him: "How hard it is to keep our hearts from going too far even in honest affections towards the creature, while we are so backward to love God, who should have all the heart and soul and might. Too strong love to any, though it be good in the kind, may be sinful and hurtful in the degree. It will turn too many of your thoughts from God, and they will be too often running after the beloved creature It will increase your sufferings by involving you in all the dangers and troubles of those whom you over-love." Margaret copied this paragraph from one of Richard's letters, and after her death, Richard found this and many others like it as he sorted through her personal papers. These excerpts give us a tantalizing glimpse of the beginnings of their relationship.

Unfortunately, a glimpse is all we have. The original draft of Richard's *Breviate* was much more revealing, written "perhaps with the less prudent judgment [though] the more truth; for passionate weakness poureth out all, which greater prudence may conceal." Richard asked several friends to comment on his manuscript. They were so concerned that such transparency could subject him to gossip and ridicule that they urged him to revise parts of it. Uncharacteristically, Richard heeded their advice. As a result, he wrote, "[t]hat which is left out of the narrative of my wife's life is the occasions and inducements of our marriage."

Priorities

The 17th-century conception of marriage was very different from the soft-focused and self-centered models that fire contemporary imaginations. The Westminster Confession states concisely that "marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate issue, and of the church with a holy seed, and for preventing uncleanness."

Feelings and love and passion were not banished from Puritan marriage; rather, within the safe confines of God's intentions for husband and wife, they were encouraged and free to grow.

Both Richard and Margaret experienced their marriage as God's goodness to each of them. Says Richard about Margaret: "When we were married, her sadness and melancholy vanished: counsel did something to it, and contentment something; and being taken up with our household affairs did somewhat. And we lived in inviolated love and mutual complacency sensible of the benefit of mutual help." And for Richard, Margaret was "a woman of extraordinary acuteness of wit, solidity, and judgment, incredible prudence and sagacity and sincere devotedness to God, and unusual strict obedience to him ... who ... heaped on me ... many and great obligations to love and tenderness."

Though they remained without children, both Richard and Margaret took their childlessness as an opportunity from God to invest themselves further in ministries of mercy and giving (Margaret), and writing and preaching (Richard).

Passion

Even so, Richard and Margaret's marriage, like most, was neither perfect nor easy. Marriage brings out both the best and the worst in a person, a reality with which Richard struggled: "My dear wife did look for more good in me than she found, especially lately in my weakness and decay. We are all like pictures that must not be looked on too near. They that come near us find more faults and badness in us than

others at a distance know." Even their different upbringings could cause friction: "Her household affairs she ordered with so great skill and decency as that others much praised that which I was not fit judge of. I had been bred among , and I thought that so much washing of stairs and rooms, to keep them as clean as their trenchers and dishes, and so much ado about cleanliness and trifles, was a sinful eccentricity and expense of servants' time, who might that while have been reading some good book. But she that was otherwise bred had somewhat other thoughts."

Ever the pastoral realist, Richard understood that "the pleasing of a wife is no easy task. There is an unsuitableness in the best and wisest and most alike They that agree in religion, in love and interest, yet may have different apprehensions about occasional occurrences, persons, things, words, etc. That will seem the best way to one that seems the worst to the other."

With raw honesty, Richard acknowledges that Margaret was God's loving means of pointing out and challenging his weaknesses: "Indeed, she was so much for calmness, deliberation, and doing nothing rashly and in haste, and my condition and business as well as temper made me do and speak much so suddenly, that she principally differed from me and blamed me in this."

Richard and Margaret also suffered with each other. Their poor health was vexing enough. But his leadership role among Puritan (and later nonconforming) Christians made him the object of harassment and persecution. With Richard repeatedly fined and even imprisoned, and with the authorities forcing them to move many times, they saw their circumstances as God-given opportunities to care for each other and for those around them in even worse straits.

Though Richard was plainspoken about their struggles and frailties, he felt profoundly that Margaret was God's very good gift to him and "the meetest helper I could have had in the world." This Puritan's marriage, at least, reveals that behind the contemporary stereotype of rigid and overscrupulous killjoys stood real people who really cared for each other and who gave and experienced a love that overcame every obstacle until only death could pry them apart.

As Richard wrote elsewhere, "It is a mercy to have a faithful friend, that loveth you entirely, and is as true to you as yourself, to whom you may open your mind and communicate your affairs, and who would be ready to strengthen you, and divide the cares of your affairs and family with you, and help you to bear your burdens, and comfort you in your sorrows, and be the daily companion of your lives, and partaker of your joys and sorrows ... and ... so near a friend to be a helper to your soul; to join with you in prayer and other holy exercises; to watch over you and tell you of your sins and dangers, and to stir up in you the grace of God, and remember you of the life to come, and cheerfully accompany you in the ways of holiness."

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Called to be a Family

By J. William Black and Jennifer Trafton

An Englishman's home is his castle, the saying goes. But a Puritan's home was his church. The Puritans regarded the worship, Christian instruction, and discipline in the home as absolutely essential to the health of society. Richard Baxter exhorted his readers, "Keep up the government of God in your families: holy families must be the chief preservers of the interest of religion in the world."

Raising a family was therefore not merely a private matter; it was a vocation to which one was called by God. The father was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the spiritual life of the family, leading daily devotions, catechizing the children and servants, and being a godly role model. His wife was his assistant in these tasks. Together, they were to spur on their children to holiness. Parenting was an act of stewardship, as Puritan pastor Thomas Watson wrote: Christian parents "will endeavor that their

children may be more God's children than theirs." Baxter gave this advice: "Let your own example teach your children that holiness and heavenliness and blamelessness of tongue and life, which you desire them to learn and practise. The example of parents is most powerful with children, both for good and evil ... they will sooner believe your bad lives than your good words." The Puritans found in the Bible a treasure trove of principles for ordering family life, and they tried to model their families after those of Israel's patriarchs.

Of course, this was the ideal. The reality was much more complicated. Family life in 17th-century England was extremely difficult. Without running water, electricity, or basic medical care, with frequent illness and death (more than half of all children died in infancy), life was hard and short and full of pain for most people. Seen in these stark terms, the Puritans' efforts to apply Scripture (as they read it) to the circumstances facing their families were close to heroic. Baxter credits women with bearing a heavy burden: "Women especially must expect so much suffering in a married life, that if God had not put into them a natural inclination to it, and so strong a love to their children, as maketh them patient under the most annoying troubles, the world would ere this been at an end, through their refusal of so calamitous a life."

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 89: Richard Baxter & the English Puritans

The Cost of Pilgrimage

After the Restoration, Protestants persecuted Protestants like never before.

John Coffey

The year 1660 was a catastrophe for radical Puritans. The return of the monarchy under Charles II spelled disaster for people like John Milton, who had written passionate tracts defending religious liberty, republican government, and the legitimacy of killing a king. He made a last-minute plea, urging the nation to rally to "the good old cause." Having set out for the Promised Land by "turning regal bondage into a free commonwealth," it would be folly to return to the servitude of Egypt.

Despite his warnings, the monarchy was restored and a warrant was issued for Milton's arrest. He survived, thanks to influential friends, but other Puritan revolutionaries were put to death in gruesome public executions or locked up in the Tower of London.

Moderate Puritans, like Richard Baxter, did not share Milton's despair in May 1660. Although Baxter had been a supporter of Parliamentary causes during the English Civil War, he was no anti-monarchist and deplored the execution of Charles I. While his ministry had flourished under Cromwell, he was no great admirer of the Lord Protector. The return of the Stuart dynasty promised an end to years of political and religious upheaval, and initially Baxter looked forward to the restoration of a comprehensive national church encompassing both Puritans and Anglicans. In June 1660, he was appointed a chaplain to the new king, and he preached before Charles II in July.

In October, leaders who favored a church led by bishops met to negotiate with those who favored a church ruled by elders (presbyters). The king declared that the restored church would be governed by bishops *and* presbyters and would allow considerable latitude on matters of ceremony. Baxter was offered a bishopric, and although he turned it down, he recommended others who might be willing to accept. The Presbyterians were willing to agree to a church governed by bishops so long as they did not impose strict conformity on "tender consciences."

But the hopes of moderate Puritans were quickly dashed.

Turning up the heat

Puritanism was associated in the minds of many with revolution in church and state, and Puritans soon faced a popular backlash. Almost 700 Puritan ministers were ousted from their parishes in 1660 alone—Baxter himself was deprived of his living in Kidderminster, and not allowed even to deliver his farewell sermon. During negotiations with the bishops in March 1661, he finally recognized that they were determined to enforce conformity to the Prayer Book and unwilling to accommodate the consciences of English Puritans. With the election of the monarchist "Cavalier" Parliament, hard-line Anglicans were on the rise, and over the next few years Parliament enacted a series of punitive laws against religious dissent. The centerpiece of the legislation was the Act of Uniformity (1662), which required all clergy to be ordained by bishops, to renounce earlier commitments to reform, and to assent to the new Prayer Book. The Act forced more than 1000 Puritan ministers out of their parishes, bringing the total number ejected to just over 2000 (around one-fifth of the total number of clergy).

England now witnessed a persecution of Protestants by other Protestants without parallel in 17th-century Europe. Thousands of Puritans were arrested, prosecuted, and imprisoned. Hundreds of meetings were

violently broken up, and nonconformists were even attacked by organized gangs and angry mobs. The statistics for Quakers alone are startling: Around 15,000 suffered imprisonment or fines, 450 died in jail, and 200 more were banished.

The more mainstream Presbyterians were treated less harshly, but one in ten of the ejected ministers spent some time in jail. Baxter himself was imprisoned in 1669. Like Bunyan—who wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* in Bedford jail—he was not unduly troubled. "My imprisonment," he wrote, "was no great trouble to me." His jailer was kind, he had "a large room" and "a fair garden," and his wife was "never so cheerful a companion to me as in prison." They "kept house as contentedly and comfortably as at home," and received a constant stream of visitors. But prison was hot and noisy, and Baxter found study difficult due to constant interruptions. He was grateful that his imprisonment lasted only a few days.

Persecuted pastors

Despite suffering persecution, Baxter continued to seek peace and reunion with the Church of England. He regularly attended worship at parish churches and actively encouraged nonconformists to practice "occasional conformity." He also participated in negotiations with moderate Anglicans who shared his desire for a broader national church that would accommodate Puritans. Anglican laymen like the scientist Robert Boyle joined forces with Baxter to raise support for the missionary work of the Puritan John Eliot among American Indians.

A minority of Puritan ministers even managed to hold onto their parishes, despite their failure to conform fully to Anglican ceremonies. Ralph Josselin—whose famous diary offers a remarkable record of 17th-century life—remained in his Essex vicarage until his death in 1683. Powerful politicians like the Earl of Shaftesbury were openly sympathetic to the plight of nonconformists. Indeed, Shaftesbury's secretary, the philosopher John Locke, became a leading advocate of religious toleration.

Finally, Charles II himself disliked religious persecution and introduced a Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 to allow nonconformists to open legal meetinghouses. Although the king's Declaration was quickly overturned by Parliament, Baxter was able to resume his public ministry in the 1670s. He moved to London and preached regularly to gatherings of nonconformists. He was, however, kept under a close watch and subjected to various kinds of harassment, including fines.

Baxter on trial

Persecution intensified in the 1680s, after nonconformists and their Anglican sympathizers had tried and failed to exclude the king's Catholic brother (James, Duke of York) from succession to the throne. Baxter was arrested and tried before Judge Jeffreys, a man notorious for his drunkenness, vengefulness, and brutality.

The trial was held on May 30, 1685, before a crowded courtroom at the Guildhall in the heart of London. Approaching the age of 60, Baxter was a frail and stooping figure, "nothing but skin and bones," according to one eyewitness. But his friends had secured half-a-dozen of the finest defense lawyers, and witnesses were lined up to testify to his good character and moderation.

Jeffreys, however, had no intention of conducting a fair trial. Throughout the proceedings, he poured abuse on the venerable preacher. He told the court that Baxter was "an old rogue," "a conceited, stubborn, fanatical dog" who deserved to be "whipped through the city." He had "poisoned the world with his Kidderminster doctrine" and preached incendiary sermons to foment war against Charles I.

Baxter's lawyers pointed out that this was a travesty, that Baxter had been willing to accept bishops, and had done more than anyone to convince Puritans to remain in communion with the Church of England.

Jeffreys was contemptuous. "Baxter for bishops!" he exclaimed, "a merry conceit indeed." The truth was that the "old knave" had "written books enough to load a cart," each one packed with sedition. Baxter, Jeffreys insisted, was a bitter enemy of bishops and kings and would not hesitate to plunge the nation into another civil war.

Throughout this bitter harangue, Baxter behaved with the utmost dignity, responding calmly on the rare occasions when he was allowed to speak. The future Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson, later wrote that Baxter had never seemed so "honourable" or so "great" as when he "stood at bay, berogued, abused, despised." But Jeffreys had ensured that the jury was packed with enemies of Puritanism. Baxter was found guilty, fined, and jailed from June 1685 to November 1686.

On his release, Baxter quickly returned to preaching, and he lived to see the relatively bloodless "Glorious Revolution" of 1688-89, which overthrew the Catholic king James II. Nonconformity was now guaranteed toleration by act of Parliament. Baxter still dreamt of a national church that would embrace all English Christians, but the new era was to be one of sanctioned pluralism rather than Christian reunion.

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Pastoring Plague Victims

by John Coffey

By the 1660s, London was the largest metropolis in Western Europe, with almost half a million inhabitants. But in April 1665, the city was hit by a devastating outbreak of bubonic plague. Around 200,000 of the more prosperous residents fled to the countryside, and they were joined by many of the Anglican clergy. Most of those who remained were the poor who lived in crowded and unsanitary alleys, cellars, and tenements. By September, when the plague was at its worst, 10,000 people perished in a single week.

With many churches left without a resident minister, nonconformist ministers seized on the disaster as an opportunity to return to their old parishes. Baxter tells us that the plague brought "one great benefit" to the city, for it "occasioned the silenced ministers more openly and laboriously to preach the Gospel, to the exceeding comfort and profit of the people." In Baxter's words, they pitied "the dying and distressed people that had none to call the impenitent to repentance, nor to help men to prepare for another world, nor to comfort them in their terrors." Their courage was widely admired and ensured that in the future nonconformist ministers would enjoy greater "freedom of preaching" in the city. Yet at the very time that they were ministering to the victims of the plague, the Parliament (sitting safely in Oxford) was passing the Five Mile Act, which prohibited nonconformist clergy from coming within five miles of their former parishes or any urban corporation.

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On the Record: The Character of an Old English Puritan or Nonconformist

The classic description of Puritanism from a 1646 tract by John Geree

The Old English Puritan was such an one, that honored God above all, and under God gave every one his due.

His first care was to serve God... making the word of God the rule of his worship. He highly esteemed order in the House of God: but would not under color of that submit to superstitious rites, which are superfluous, and perish in their use...

He was much in prayer; with it he began and closed the day... He esteemed that manner of prayer best, where by the gift of God, expressions were varied according to present wants and occasions; yet did he not account set forms unlawful... He did not wholly reject the liturgy, but the corruption of it.

He esteemed reading of the word an ordinance of God both in private and public but did not account reading to be preaching... He accounted preaching as necessary now as in the Primitive Church, God's pleasure being still by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe. He esteemed the preaching best wherein was most of God, least of man, when vain flourishes of wit and words were declined, and the demonstration of God's Spirit and power studied He esteemed those sermons best that came closest to the conscience: yet would he have men's consciences awakened, not their persons disgraced. He was a man of good spiritual appetite, and could not be contented with one meal a day. An afternoon sermon did relish as well to him as one in the morning...

The Lord's Day he esteemed a divine ordinance, and rest on it necessary, so far as it conduced to holiness... Lawful recreations he thought this day unseasonable, and unlawful ones much more abominable: yet he knew the liberty God gave him for needful refreshing, which he neither did refuse nor abuse.

The sacrament of baptism he received in infancy which he looked back to in age to answer his engagements, and claim his privileges. The Lord's Supper he accounted part of his soul's food: to which he labored to keep an appetite...

Right discipline he judged pertaining not to the being, but to the well-being of a church. Therefore he esteemed those churches most pure where government is by elders.

The corruptions that were in churches he thought his duty to bewail, with endeavors of amendment: yet he would not separate, where he might partake in the worship, and not in the corruption...

His chief music was singing of psalms wherein though he neglected not the melody of the voice, yet he chiefly looked after that of the heart. He disliked such church music as moved sensual delight, and was as hinderance to spiritual enlargements.

He accounted subjection to the higher powers to be part of pure religion, as well as to visit the fatherless and widows... Just laws and commands he willingly obeyed not only for fear but for conscience also; but such as were unjust he refused to observe, choosing rather to obey God than man...

He was careful in all relations to know, and to duty, and that with singleness of heart as unto Christ. He accounted religion an engagement to duty, that the best Christians should be best husbands, best wives, best parents, best children, best masters, best servants, best magistrates, best subjects, that the doctrine of God might be adorned, not blasphemed. His family he endeavors to make a church... laboring that those that were borne in it, might be born again unto God...

He was a man of tender heart, not only in regard of his own sin, but others' misery... He was sober in the use of things of this life, rather beating down the body, than pampering it, yet he denied not himself the use of God's blessing, lest he should be unthankful, but avoid excess lest he should be forgetful of the Donor. In his habit he avoided costliness and vanity

His own life he accounted a warfare, wherein Christ was his captain, his arms, prayers, and tears. The Cross his banner, and his word, ***Vincit qui patitur*** [he who suffers conquers].

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

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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The English Puritans: Recommended Resources

If this issue has piqued your interest in pilgrimaging with the Puritans, here are some books that will aid your progress.

On Puritanism in general

- J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Crossway Books, 1990)
- Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were* (Zondervan, 1986)
- Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Soli Deo Gloria, 1997)
- William Barker, *Puritan Profiles* (Christian Focus Publications, 1996, 2003)
- Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism* (Carey Publications, 1977, 1979)
- John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1588-1689* (Longman, 2002)
- Marcus L. Loane, *Makers of Puritan History* (Baker Book House, 1961, 1980)
- Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford, 1990)
- *Puritan Papers* [conference presentations surveying many aspects of the Puritan movement and its leadership], edited by D. M. Lloyd-Jones and J. I. Packer, 5 vols. (P&R Publishing, 2001-2005)

On Richard Baxter

- J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Regent College Publishing and Paternoster Press, 2003) *and A Grief Sanctified: Through Sorrow to Eternal Hope, Including Richard Baxter's Timeless Memoir of His Wife's Life and Death* (Crossway, 2002)
- J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Idea of the Reformed Pastor* (Paternoster Press, 2004)
- Paul C. H. Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2004)

On Other Puritans

- Michael A. G. Haykin, *To Honour God: The Spirituality of Oliver Cromwell* (Joshua Press, 1999)
- Sinclair Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Banner of Truth, 1987)
- John Owen: *The Man and His Theology*, ed. by Sinclair Ferguson et al. (P&R Publishing, 2003)
- David B. Calhoun, *Grace Abounding: The L, Books & Influence of John Bunyan* (Christian Focus Publications, 2005)

Puritan classics

The best way into the Puritans' worldview is through their own words. As a guide on your journey, *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, edited by Kelly M. Kopic and Randall C. Gleason (Inter Varsity Press, 2004), provides a helpful and thorough introduction to many key Puritan books and their authors. Here are a few classics to start with:

- Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor and A Christian Directory*
- John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress and Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*
- John Owen, *On the Mortification of Sin; The Holy Spirit; and The Glory of Christ*
- Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*

- Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*
- John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*
- John Milton, *Paradise Lost*
- The Westminster Confession and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms

Other resources

Soli Deo Gloria (www.ligonier.org/sdgl) is a publishing house that specializes in Puritan reprints. Banner of Truth (www.banneroftruth.org) also publishes works by and about the Puritans. A wonderful online resource is the Christian Classics Ethereal Library (www.ccel.org), which includes works by Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, John Milton, John Owen, Thomas Shepard, and Thomas Watson. You'll also find Puritan-related articles, short biographies, and primary sources on "A Puritan's Mind" (www.puritansmind.com).

Finally, *Christian History & Biography* has several back issues on related topics. Issue 41 focused on the American Puritans, Issue 11 on John Bunyan and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and Issue 48 on Thomas Cranmer and the English Reformation. For information about ordering, see <http://store.yahoo.com/lcti/chrisis.html>.

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Martyrs to the Spear

Fifty years after five missionaries were murdered in Ecuador, their story still inspires.

Kathryn Long and Carolyn Nystrom

On Wednesday, January 11, 1956, a Piper Cruiser PA-14 dipped slowly over the Curaray River in eastern Ecuador. Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) pilot Johnny Keenan leaned out the window, looking, looking. Below him squatted the stripped remains of another yellow Piper. Nothing stirred. Then, about a quarter mile downriver, he saw the khaki pants and white shirt of a young man floating face down in the water. Johnny reached for his radio.

On the other end of his call, some 50 miles away at Shell Mera, sat pilot wife, Marj Saint. She listened to Johnny's message as three other women hovered at her side.

Late on Wednesday the body of law student-turned-missionary, Ed McCully, was identified by Quichua Indians who knew him. Unable to retrieve the body from the Curaray, they tossed McCully's size 13 1/2 shoe on the shore and brought back his watch.

On Friday, January 13, a search party hiked and canoed their way through 25 miles of jungle to rendezvous with Ecuadorian soldiers, other Quichuas, a U.S. military officer, and *Life* photographer Cornell Capa. They found what was left of a dream: a few personal effects, an overturned pot of beans, and, in the water, the bodies of four young missionaries. They were World War II paratrooper Roger Youderian, budding scholar Peter Fleming, the intensely spiritual, indomitable Jim Elliot, and the imaginative, technologically creative MAF pilot Nate Saint. The search party buried the bodies just inside the jungle during a torrential downpour. Jack Shalanko, who helped, later wrote, "They were decomposed beyond recognition. Some still had spears in them."

These men between the ages of 27 and 32 were husbands and fathers (eight children ages seven and younger among them, with one more baby due in a month). All shared a passion for taking the good news to those who had never heard the name of Jesus. "Operation Auca" was over. Or was it?

Braving the jungle

The dream had taken shape in the minds of Saint, Elliot, McCully, and Fleming. The first three had known each other at Wheaton College, where Saint had taken a year's classes and where Elliot and McCully were campus leaders, star athletes, and notorious practical jokers. Other missionaries nicknamed them "the Brethren boys," since Elliot, McCulley, and Fleming worked under the auspices of the Plymouth Brethren. In conversations together they had wondered if they might be able to make peaceful contact with an isolated and hostile indigenous group in Ecuador, then called "Aucas" ("savage" in the lowland Quichua language) and now known by the name they give themselves, "Waorani" ("the people").

In late 1955, approximately 500 Waorani lived scattered across a territory about the size of Connecticut. Their lands were only a short plane ride from the locations where Elliot, McCully, and Saint were posted. Moving frequently and living in small clearings, the Waorani were hard for outsiders to locate. Most didn't want to, since the Indians greeted all visitors with eight-foot-long spears. However, in September 1955, when Saint and Fleming spotted a number of Wao clearings, they thought they could use the airplane to prepare the way for peaceful ground contact.

Between October 6 and December 23, Saint, accompanied by either McCully or Elliot, made 13 flights over the Wao clearings. Fleming provided prayer and financial support from his station. Saint lowered gifts to the ground. First, they sent down an aluminum cooking pot decorated with floating ribbons, then buttons, pants, shirts (the Waorani wore only cotton G-strings), an ax head, knives, photos, machetes. The Waorani received these gifts with smiles and laughter. They began to return gifts: a headband, woven thread, smoked monkey tail, two squirrels, a parrot. During these exchanges the men shouted carefully mouthed phrases in the Wao language, which they had picked up from Dayuma, a young Wao woman who had fled tribal violence only to live in servitude at a nearby hacienda.

The seeming openness of the Waorani and favorable weather led the missionaries to consider early January for peaceful contact. A month before the launch, they added Roger Youderian, a member of the Gospel Missionary Union who had survived the Battle of the Bulge. The date was set for Tuesday, January 3, 1956. Saint ferried the other four to their designated spot some six miles from the nearest Wao clearing. "The neighbors," two Wao women and a man, showed up on Friday, January 6. From the perspective of the five missionaries, it was a friendly visit. The Indians sampled hamburgers, and the missionaries shared their insect repellent. The man, Naenkiwi, was intrigued by the airplane, so Saint took him for a ride. The Waorani were talkative, but neither group understood the other.

Dangerous liaisons

The missionaries did not know that contact with these three Waorani had placed them in the middle of a potentially deadly conflict. Naenkiwi wanted to marry Gimari, the younger of the two women. Her brother, Nampa, objected, and the Waorani, who were engaged in vicious patterns of violence among themselves, often killed for less than this. The rage was deflected to the five missionaries. They were **cowodi** ("outsiders" or "cannibals") and traditional enemies. Years later, Geketa, a member of the spearing party, gave his perspective on what happened in a film produced by the Summer Institute of Linguistics:

"One day a plane flew over us. It circled and it circled. ... They dropped clothes and knives to us from the plane. Then they called, 'Come, come, come with us.' ... A few from our group went to meet them. Later, the next night, Nampa went into a rage over a wedding he was against. Nampa ... grabbed all his spears and yelled to me, 'Come on, let's go and kill. Just right here close by are cowodi. Remember how our mothers warned us when we were children. Cowodi have always carried guns and shot us. Now here's our chance, let's kill them.' ... [The next day] the plane ... landed on the sandbar, then we went off with our spears to kill. The cowodi were on the sandbar calling to us. Nampa ran at one with a spear. The man shot Nampa, and the man fell right there. ... We speared another, and even as they were running, I speared two more ... The last cowodi called out to us. 'Don't spear. Don't spear.' And we understood. 'We just came to meet you. We aren't going to kill you. Why are you killing us?' He was standing on a log jutting out of the river when Kimu ran a spear through his chest, and he fell into the water."

Although the exact circumstances are unclear, further reconstructions of the event suggested that one missionary did fire a pistol, probably the shot that hit Nampa, who later died. The missionaries clearly offered no organized resistance, nor did any seek to save himself apart from his friends. By mid-afternoon, Sunday, January 8, it was all over. Nate Saint's watch stopped at 3:12 p.m.

The making of heroes

The story of the five missionaries killed in Ecuador circled the globe and struck a deep chord among American evangelicals as well. During the 20th century, an estimated 26 million people around the world were killed at least in part because of their Christian faith. Most of these died relatively unnoticed. Yet these five became known, modeled, celebrated, almost beatified, so that at the 50th anniversary of their death, books and films continue to appear and many people remember. Why?

Some of the explanation rests rightly on the character of the five and their wives. They were courageous,

passionately spiritual, adventurous, and acted out of concern for the well-being of the Waorani. They were willing to give their lives in order spare these people the agonies of hell—and did so.

Circumstances seemed united to appeal to the masses. The men with their wives and children embodied all that post-war Americans hoped for their own families. New worldwide communication sustained public attention in the first decade where such instant story-telling was possible. Quito missionary radio station HCJB carried the unfolding story via short wave. *Life* magazine sent photographer Cornell Capa to the scene. *Reader's Digest* picked up the story including journal notes by the men. Elisabeth Elliot's *Through Gates of Splendor* became a best seller. Magazine articles profiled the commitment of the wives as four of them remained to continue in missionary service.

For people searching for meaning in a world caught up in Cold War fears, this eternal perspective on life held great appeal. As historian Dana Robert has commented of other missionary heroes or heroines, in death the five men became more important as missionaries to their homeland than they were able to be to the Waorani. Over the years, many have pointed to the deaths as influential in their conversion or their call to the mission field.

"On behalf of Jesus, do not spear."

What happened to the Waorani? Before the men's deaths, the Wao woman Dayuma had worked as a language informant for Rachel Saint, Nate's older sister. Rachel served with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). Dayuma opened the way for Rachel and Jim Elliot's widow, Elisabeth, to make peaceful contact with Dayuma's extended family, including the men who had speared their loved ones.

The Waorani had experienced more than six decades of violent and bloody revenge killings among themselves. More than 60 percent of the deaths during this period were violent, making the Waorani one of the most violent cultures on earth, according to anthropologists James Yost and James S. Boster. In Wao culture, Rachel and Elisabeth should have sought revenge. When instead they spoke of God, they offered the Waorani a way to end the cycle of violence.

Over the next 20 years, this happened. Most Waorani no longer live in fear of spearings, although in 1987, two Catholic missionaries were killed by warriors from an isolated group of Waorani, and as recently as 2003, there was a tragic outbreak of intra-tribal violence.

Elisabeth Elliot left the Waorani in December 1961. Except for about five years, Rachel Saint lived among the people until her death in 1994. She began the translation of the New Testament into the Wao language, completed by SIL staff members Catherine Peeke and Rosi Jung. Anthropologist Yost and literacy coordinator Pat Kelley also learned the difficult Wao language and spent extended periods with the people during the 1970s and 1980s. Nate Saint's eldest son, Steve, and his family lived among the Waorani for a year in 1995. All have tried to model what it means to be Christian, though there has been controversy over the years about their and other missionary involvement.

The Waorani themselves, who number about 2,000 today, have faced numerous challenges brought by increasing encounters with the outside world. Some have rejected Christianity as they understand it, others have accepted the limited version of "thou shalt not kill," and still others are seeking a vital, meaningful faith based on their understanding of God's Word.

But the seed has been planted, and there are Waorani who live the faith for which, a half-century ago, the five missionaries died.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Turning Point

The Crowning of Charlemagne

Patrick Henry Reardon

Few moments in world history proved to be of greater significance than what transpired in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome on Christmas Day in the year 800.

All eyes in the basilica that day were fixed on an unusually tall, very energetic, and powerfully built man of 58, a Frankish king named Charles, as he knelt devoutly before the tomb of the Apostle Peter. Just as he was beginning to rise after his prayer, Charles was approached by the Bishop of Rome, Pope Leo III, who set a crown on his head and dramatically announced, "Charles Augustus, crowned great and peace-giving emperor of the Romans, life and victory!"

"Great" he was indeed, and that Latin adjective, *magnus*, was eventually assumed into the name by which he has been best known, Charlemagne. For the first time in more than three centuries, and with the blessing of the Church, Rome once again had a Western emperor.

The diadem set on the head of Charles that day crowned likewise the many and colossal achievements of his career. Since becoming King of the Franks in 768, Charles had unified and reorganized most of Western Europe, using his sword to accomplish the first task and his considerable executive skills to bring about the second. Ironically, his sole significant military defeat, when he pushed south into the Pyrenees to attack the Moors in northern Spain, attained legendary status in *The Song of Roland*. His other enemies—Saxons, Avars, Bavarians, Lombards, and the rest—did not fare so well, and by the time he received his imperial crown, Charles controlled everything from the English Channel to the borders of Byzantium. With respect to his governing, Charles enjoyed almost no structural support and virtually no centralized taxation. He relied almost entirely on alliances constructed by the force of colossal personality and the influence of his many strong friendships.

Three aspects of Charlemagne's influence live on.

Renaissance man

First, he was the father of Europe. Although the political unity Charlemagne imposed on the greater part of that continent did not outlive him, the cultural unity of Europe did.

At his royal court, he gathered the cream of available intellect, centered around the scholar Alcuin, whom he brought from York in England. Monks and other copyists were set to transcribing ancient manuscripts, both classical and Christian, for the preservation and extension of learning.

Numerous libraries were collected, and schools were established at monasteries and cathedrals, the forerunners of the great universities. Myriad hymns and poems were composed, along with commentaries on Holy Scripture, treatises on music, theological works, and numerous chronicles of history. Advances were made in architecture (at Aachen and Ingelheim, for instance), technology (such as the iron horseshoe and the padded harness for plowing with horses), and agriculture (for example, the system of triple crop rotation). Under the leadership of this wise and powerful monarch there arose a cultural enrichment still known as the Carolingian Renaissance.

His maintenance and encouragement of a distinctly Christian culture in Europe encouraged Charlemagne to keep out the influence of Islam, which he regarded as the major enemy and obstacle to his enterprise. He would have scoffed at any notion of a compatibility of Islam with a Christian Europe. After all, it was Charlemagne's own grandfather, Charles Martel, who had stopped the Muslim advance in Gaul at the Battle of Poitiers/Tours in 732, and there were still considerable Muslim forces in Spain, Sicily, and southern Italy. In his opposition to the fortunes of Islam in Europe, however, Charlemagne's policy was sufficiently flexible to permit diplomatic relations with the caliph in Baghdad, who was likewise inimical to the Muslim Moors in Spain.

An independent papacy

Second, in crowning Charlemagne the papacy was tacitly admitting its need for political support in order to provide adequate pastoring to Western Europe. If the papacy strengthened Charlemagne's hand, Charlemagne did no less for the papacy. Indeed, just two days before his coronation as emperor, Charlemagne had presided at the trial that found Pope Leo innocent of charges brought against him by enemies in Rome.

During the ensuing years, the papacy depended in no small measure on the influence and authority of Charlemagne to preserve its authority over the Papal States in Italy, its ability to dispatch missionaries to hostile regions, its efforts to impose ecclesiastical reforms, and its competence to enforce important decisions. For centuries to come, the relative independence that Charlemagne conferred on the papacy (an independence from civil authority that it enjoys to the present day, thanks to the Lateran Treaty with Italy in 1929) gave the Bishops of Rome an immense and far-reaching capacity for influence and authority enjoyed by no other pastors in Christian history.

A divided church

Third, Charlemagne was no great friend of the Christian East. In conquering the Lombards in northern Italy, in fact, he fought the armies of Byzantium, and in claiming to be the Emperor of Rome, he assumed a title always held by the emperors at Constantinople.

Papal conferral of imperial authority on Charlemagne's house became a chief source of ongoing tension between Rome and Constantinople, especially when Charlemagne, in spite of protestations from the papacy, intruded his influence into the controversies over icons and the creed. Charlemagne's objection to the Eastern Orthodox form of the Nicene Creed was especially troublesome. Two and a half centuries after Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, those doctrinal and canonical tensions between East and West finally became schismatic and tragic, when the legates of Pope Leo IX excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1054.

Echoes today

From the perspectives of Christian unity and European identity, the concerns of Charlemagne seem terribly contemporary. First, Christians have never recovered from the doctrinal tensions of his day. Christians East and West are still deeply divided. Second, it is conceivable that Europe, now that it has in large measure abandoned the Christian identity that Charlemagne gave it, could very well become a Muslim continent in the decades to come.

In one way and another, Charlemagne is still with us.

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John Owen put me straight

J. I. Packer

They called it the Victorious Spirit- filled life. You got into it, they said, by total surrender to Jesus Christ (they assumed no one does this at conversion), and then looking to him whenever you felt sinful impulses stirring. He would then by his Spirit douse the desire, and quiet peace and joyful satisfaction would be your portion once again. As described by the gifted preachers under whom I sat, it sounded wonderful. But I could not make it work.

I was a new convert in my late teens. I had kept Christ at bay for too long and was trying to make up for lost time. Like any other introverted adolescent, I was a loner, my emotional life was all over the place, and I was essentially a mixed-up kid. I heard the formula as a way of transcending my less-than-satisfying inner state and labored to follow the instructions, but the mad, bad urges still raged and the quiet peace did not come.

What was wrong? I concluded that my surrender could not have been total and scoured my inside to find what more I could consecrate. Harry Iron— side, sometime preacher at Moody Church in Chicago, drove himself into a nervous breakdown doing this, and I might well have gone the same way. But I chanced upon a mini—treatise, a set of sermons stitched together by the Puritan John Owen (1616—1663), pontifically titled *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*. And here was God's chemo for my cancered soul.

Reaching across three centuries, Owen showed me my inside 'my heart' as no one had ever done before. Sin, he told me, is a blind, anti-God, egocentric energy in the fallen human spiritual system, ever fomenting self-centered and self- deceiving desires, ambitions, purposes, plans, attitudes, and behaviors. Now that I was a regenerate believer, born again, a new creation in Christ, sin that formerly dominated me had been dethroned but was not yet destroyed. It was marauding within me all the time, bringing back sinful desires that I hoped I had seen the last of, and twisting my new desires for God and godliness out of shape so that they became pride-perversed too. Lifelong conflict with the besetting sins that besetting sin generates was what I must expect.

What to do? Here was Owen's answer, in essence: Have the holiness of God clear in your mind. Remember that sin desensitizes you to itself. Watch that is, prepare to recognize it, and search it out within you by disciplined, Bible-based, Spirit-led self- examination. Focus on the living Christ and his love for you on the cross. Pray, asking for strength to say "no" to sin's suggestions and to fortify yourself against bad habits by forming good ones contrary to them. And ask Christ to kill the sinful urge you are fighting, as the theophanic angel in C. S. Lewis's *Great Divorce* tells the man with the lizard to do.

Does it work? Yes. Sixty years on, I can testify to that. What was wrong with the Victorious Life teachers? They glossed over sin and so did not tell me half of what I needed to know.

Does Owen's book minister to others as it ministered to me? Yes. From prison just recently came the following:

"I found this book... near a toilet on the floor.... Immediately after I finished reading Owen's *Mortification of Sin*. I got on my knees on the floor of my cell and begged for Jesus to come into my

miserable life and redeem me... and for the first time in my entire life I meant every single word that I professed Thank you, Jesus!"

Owen is one of the dead who still speak.

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