

HM 4.1 – Puritan Perspectives on Ministry

Who/what were the Puritans and why should we study them ?

See further:

- Patrick Collinson, 'A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31, 1980, 483-88
Christopher Durston / Jacqueline Eales: *The Culture of English Puritanism 1560-1700* 1996
William Lamont: *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 1996
John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-89*, 1998, esp.3-7 and 17-27

A. Defining “puritan” / the “essence” of puritanism

A string of quotations which between them say:

- a) the task of defining “puritan” or capturing the “essence” of puritanism is difficult, if not impossible, and possibly pointless
- b) there are various wrong turnings
- c) for all that, there is, perhaps, something to be said ...
 1. “For all the impressive scholarly attention directed to the question since the late 16th century, the meaning of the word ‘puritan’ remains unclear.” Durston/Eales, p.1
 2. “the word is a dragon in the path of every student of the period.” Christopher Hill, q. Durston/Eales p.2
 3. “there is little point in constructing elaborate statements defining what in ontological terms Puritanism was and was not, when it was not a thing definable in itself but only one half of a stressful relationship.” Collinson
 4. “a tendency to elevate taxonomy to a point where it almost replaces history”, Collinson, p.486
 5. In this field the fine art of taxonomy is misapplied, the ever greater refinement reflected in attempts to define Puritanism exactly, and within itself, actually counter-productive. ... Here the natural historian of Puritanism will find that what matters is not what people were in themselves but what they were doing to each other and saying about each other and against each other. ... The 1641 *Discourse concerning Puritans* divides Puritans into four categories: Puritans in church policy; Puritans in religion; Puritans in state; and Puritans in morality – or ‘Ethicall Puritan[s]’. But this is not proof that there were four kinds of Puritans. It is not even reliable evidence that contemporaries, all contemporaries, *thought* that there were four kinds. What matters is not what was thought (and most thoughts are hidden from us) but what it was polemically advantageous to allege. Collinson – *Cranmer to Sancroft* 112
 6. “Some would define the puritans by describing particular puritans. So in the last two to three decades we have gained a series of studies of puritan individuals, families or ‘connections’ ... Here the defining characteristic of puritanism tends to be the immediacy and intensity of the individual’s personal experience of God. other historians, however, have offered more precise definitions, usually by identifying a particular characteristic of puritanism. Thus, building on a long tradition, Walzer suggested that the doctrine of election bred anxiety and activism; Lamont saw a common thread in the pursuit of ‘godly rule’; Nuttall dwelt upon the puritans’ experience of the holy spirit, while Coolidge emphasized their understanding of edification; McGee sought to distinguish the puritan from the Anglican by their different emphases on the two halves of the ten commandments; Lake has defined puritanism as a set of priorities structured by religious experience, argued for a distinctly puritan or ‘experiential’ appreciation of predestination, and suggested that it was less individual beliefs and practices than the way in which they were combined that is typical of a puritan style; and Collinson portrays the puritans as the more evangelical protestants, whose identity stemmed in large part from their opposition to the luke-warm religion and profane society around them.” Spurr p.3

7. 'persistently pejorative' use – Collinson.
8. "arrogance and anxiety ... the old combination" – John Spurr – Durston/Eales, p.262
9. Not distinctively, exclusively Puritan:
 - to be anti Roman Catholic
 - to think that England had a special place in God's purposes
 - to be predestinarian / Calvinist (up to 1630s, anyway)
10. Puritan does not mean:
 - non Anglican or half-heartedly Anglican (up to 1640s, anyway)
 - Separatist / Dissenter
 - minimalist
 - killjoy

(H L Mencken: "Puritanism: the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy."
Macaulay: "The puritan hated bear baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators".)
11. Not defined by econ/social group, nor by region, politics, ecclesiology "an obstinately religious phenomenon" – A.G. Dickens q.10-11 of Durston/Eales
12. A "common spiritual and cultural outlook ... cast of mind ... mentalité ... severe yet vibrant spirituality" Durston/Eales p.9
13. "a cluster of ideas, attitudes and habits" – Spurr p.7
14. "a spirit or attitude" – Ryken, p.xviii
15. "began as liturgical reform but it developed into a distinct attitude towards life" – Horton Davies, q. Ryken p.7
16. Henry Parker, *Discourse Concerning Puritans*, 1641: "remarkable and singular zeal to God and the truth ... men of strict life and precise opinions which cannot be hated for anything but their zeal and piety ... the most ordinary badge of puritans is their more religious and conscionable conversation than that which is seen in other men." q. Durston/Eales p.14
17. "experimental Calvinism"
18. "essential identity ... puritan quality. ... It grows out of the individual's conviction that they have been personally saved by God, elected to salvation by a merciful God for no merit of their own; and that, as a consequence of this election, they must lead a life of visible piety, must be a member of a church modelled on the pattern of the New Testament, and must work to make their community and nation a model Christian society. Such a definition will not do justice to all puritans, including some of the greatest, nor will it satisfy those who define puritans by their views on church government or worship or popery, but it does catch the essential puritanism which remained constant throughout the seventeenth century." Spurr, 5
19. "Puritanism combines the rapture of being saved, with the rationality of a complex account of why God saves some." Spurr, 6
20. "the hotter sort of Protestants"

B. Who, what, when, where?

A Puritan was an English Christian (old or new England) who lived between 1560 and 1680 who was marked by most or all of the following characteristics:

- Desire for further reform of the Church (concern about vestments, church government, some liturgical practices, absence of discipline etc)
- Sense that a new era of a purer church and greater gospel influence was dawning
- Personal nonconformity or a greater sympathy with nonconformists than with prelatists
- Earnest pursuit of detailed holiness of life, deep knowledge of Scripture, great prayerfulness
- Developed and applied Reformed doctrine of God's providence
- Calvinistic soteriology – predestinarianism

- Biblical authority in everything
- Centrality of preaching - plain, urgent, applied
- Stress on reality, depth, inwardness of spiritual experience and the importance of spurring others on in godliness
- Emphasis on family religion
- Simplicity of language, dress, food

What about Scotland?

Church government? (“Reformed”: England – CofE / New England – Cong / Scotland – Presby)

Types of “puritan”

- Radical
- Separatist
- Independent
- Presbyterian
- nonconformist Anglican
- conformist Anglican

Some of the things they objected to:

- baptismal regeneration
- certainties of the burial service
- sign of cross
- churching women
- wedding rings
- kneel to receive LS
- vestments, esp surplice
- standing for gospel
- Sabbath laxity
- apocrypha as Scripture
- lack of discipline
- lack of preaching
- godparents
- lack of religious conference

Ryken – Puritan in-words and out-words:

reform	godly	show
well-ordered	learned	tradition
plain	profitable	superstition
simple	grave	tyranny
painful	lawful	coldness
pure	holy	drunkenness
true	sound	laziness
zeal	family religion	indulgence
duty	discipline	
truths	sermons	
conferences	meditation	

Peter Toon – Puritans and Calvinism, 1972 (DF paraphrase)

1. Commitment to Bible as Word of God, authoritative in all matters
2. Commitment to Reformed theology
3. Desire for a reformed, national Church of England
4. Belief in necessity of personal regeneration, justification, pursuit of holiness
5. Need for reformation at national, local and domestic level by legislation, teaching of Word, prayer and fasting
6. Strong sense that new era of purer church and gospel influence had dawned.

Remember Collinson's phrase: "half of a stressful relationship". Apply this to the different periods which Spurr discusses in successive chapters of *English Puritanism*:

- 1558-1603
- 1603-25
- 1618-37
- 1637-49
- 1649-62
- 1662-89

C. The tension at the heart of Puritanism ...

In quotations from Collinson's recent book, *From Cranmer to Sancroft*:

1. Puritans ... could never make up their divided minds on whether their divinely inspired mission was to take over and make over English society, or to withdraw from it into an alternative version of what it was to be English, and Christian. xv
2. In East Anglia, as in other parts of England and, for that matter, Western Europe, the children of the Protestant Reformation, not merely readers of the Bible but virtual inhabitants of a biblical mental landscape, drew their inspiration and understanding from two strands of discourse which were interwoven in their experience, but interwoven as they moved against each other in almost contrary directions. These strands were two ecclesiologies, both authentically biblical in inspiration. According to the first, the church was equivalent to the whole people in a covenanted relation to God. 'You have not chosen me but I have chosen you', with the added inference, 'whether you like it or not': an idea which the reception of Calvinism reinforced. This led to the equation of the nation, the church in the sense of the whole circumcised (baptised) community, and Israel as essentially one, the town, be it London or Ipswich, Jerusalem: or rather the reinforcement of that notion, which was older than the Reformation. And since that identification was derived from the prophetic books of the Old Testament, where Israel is castigated for its apostasy, it mattered in a sense not at all that the English nation or East Anglian society failed to live up to these expectations, or to behave as if it really was a chosen and covenanted people of God. That was only to be expected. But the pulpit, with its dire warnings and threats of impending judgement, was by no means complacent, for all that. Yet all these warnings, and even the ultimate dread that God might abandon his people and depart from England for ever ('as sure as God is God, God is going from England', said Thomas Hooker in his farewell sermon to his Chelmsford flock in 1628), were understood to be conditional, to take effect if we fail to repent, part of a divine poker game of cosmic proportions in which, said one Jacobean preacher, we seem to have entered into a contention with the Almighty to see whether we can be more sinful or he more merciful.

The contrary tendency or strand shrank the church for all practical and especially experimental purposes to the pious remnant, that small minority (it was always assumed in those religious milieux which were ancestral to East Anglian Dissent to be a small minority) of 'Christians indeed': those who were seen to repent of their sins, to exercise lively faith and (perhaps the critical criterion) to gather with others of the same kind and persuasion in self-selective, exclusive company, various kinds of [28 begins] 'conventicle', sometimes covenanted. 'Be of good comfort little flock', Jesus had said, 'it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'.

These were those few who had found the strait and narrow gate, and path. Calvinism underwrote these attitudes also, with its insistence on selective and prejudicial election.

It is important to appreciate that in the period with which this essay is concerned, which lies behind 1640 and perhaps behind the late 1630s, the cord composed of these two strands held together and took the strain. Separatism was to pull out of the cord one of its two strands." 27-28

3. Puritanism was not inherent in the godly community. It consisted in the tension between that community, the church in a gathered [120 ends] sense, and the church as the entire Christian

nation. If those called Puritans had themselves made a clean mental break with the idea of a national, all-inclusive church, there would have been no tension. Separatists had made a hard and painful decision, drastic in its consequences. But the decision once made, there was little tension. Conversely, conformists, who readily identified the church with the whole baptised communicating population, and who agreed with Richard Hooker that church and commonwealth were virtually coterminous, felt no tension, The Puritans were those whose lives were strung between the contrary principles of inclusion and exclusion. 120-21

4. As Dr Lake has helpfully suggested, virtually all the disputes between the Puritans and their opponents (which served to define and even to create Puritanism) can be reduced to the tension between the godly minority community, rendered partly visible as a kind of confessing church, and the church defined as the whole community, the territorial, or folk, church. 121
5. So we come to our third and final paradox, a familiar one which is so central to the traditional historiography of the Puritan Revolution that there will be no need to labour it. Just when the deep contradictions of Jacobean Puritanism should have been resolved in an all-embracing reformation, and when the spiritual resources built up in the conventicle ought to have been generally released to the church at large, almost the reverse happened. In the 1640s the church in the Puritan parish – or in some parishes known to us – effectively contracted to the limits of the conventicle which now came closer than ever before to detaching itself from the nominal Christianity of those outside its narrow walls, That is far from adequate as an account of the great diversity of ecclesiastical history in the period of the civil wars and Commonwealth. It also ignores the origins of powerful sectarian movements in the opportunities and opportunism of the time, which actively and willingly liberated forces and tendencies previously suppressed. I should not want to argue that the Quakers happened in a fit of absence of mind. But so far as the Puritan mainstream is concerned, the analogy of a great glacier advancing to engulf a whole landscape but then surprising itself by disintegrating and calving icebergs into a chilly sea seems apt. [168 ends] Or so the precious autobiographical narratives suggest. Here we find on the one hand the imperialistic Puritan imperative, looking for nothing less than a general and national reformation, on the other the sense of a certain number, all too few, of ‘serious Christians’, those who are known for ‘an eminent profession of religion’, ‘substantial Christians of our societie’. Adam Martindale was attracted to a parish ‘where there was a knot of good people’. ‘Our society’, whether in Martindale’s Gorton or Jolly’s Altham or Josselin’s Colne was a choice but tiny fragment, almost lost to sight among the vastly more numerous ignorant and profane, Martindale remarking of his own large parish that ‘the multitudes of the people would be dead, in all probability, ere we could goe once over them.’

The crossroads was reached with the power now in principle within the grasp of many such ministers to apply stringent pastoral discipline, excluding from the sacrament all but the visibly worthy. In one direction the road led up from this crux to the sunny uplands of an effective discipline on Scottish lines, something far from impossible in some parts of south-east Lancashire. But in the other it ran steeply down into a cosy but insecure sectarian hollow. Mainstream Puritanism, having fought its way to the crossroads, hoped to find the high road but more often than not missed its way. Martindale’s conditions of admission to the sacrament effectively restricted what in the north of England were called ‘rightings’ to ‘serious christians’, for he required communicants to use prayer and instruction in their families, to read the Bible and to sanctify the Lord’s Day ‘according to which rule (since the Reformation) we conceive we have walked and (God assisting) do intend to continue so’. But who, in Lancashire, were ‘we’? In Jolly’s Altham, where this was called ‘good order’, the Lord’s Supper was reserved for those who were worthy, that is, ‘saints visible to the eye of rational charity’. These comprised ‘the society of God’s people’, and baptism was made available only to the children of those who were now designated members, persons who had subscribed a church covenant. These were just twenty-nine persons, including fourteen women, representing only twenty of the 150 families which made up the parish. This gathered church within the church never numbered more than two or three dozen, and yet it retained the ambition of imposing a general reformation on the whole community, at the time of the major-generals offering to search out in their houses the nineteen out of twenty who never went to church. But in 1656 it was noted: ‘No conversion work at Altham’. After St Bartholomew Day [169 ends] 1662 the little ‘society’ withdrew altogether from public worship and reverted to meeting in an alehouse, where, in 1667, Jolly preached to two women only.

Josselin’s diary tells a similar story of sectarian defeat snatched from the jaws of Puritan triumph, but with a less drastic and tidy conclusion. 168-70

D. Appreciation of the Puritans

J I Packer: *A Quest for Godliness*

Introduction: Items of conscious debt ...

1. John Owen helped me to be realistic about my continuing sinfulness and the discipline of self-suspicion and mortification to which, with all Christians, I am called.
2. Owen, under God, enabled me to see how consistent and unambiguous is the biblical witness to the sovereignty and particularity of Christ's redeeming love.
3. Richard Baxter convinced me that regular discursive meditation in which as he quaintly puts it you 'imitate the most powerful preacher you have ever heard' in applying spiritual truth to yourself, as well as turning that truth into praise, is a vital discipline for spiritual health.
4. Baxter also focused my vision of the ordained minister's pastoral office.
5. The Puritans have taught me to see and feel the transitoriness of this life, to think of it, with all its richness, as essentially the gymnasium and dressing room where we are prepared for heaven and to regard readiness to die as the first step in learning to live.
6. The Puritans shaped my churchly identity, by imparting to me their vision of the wholeness of the work of God that they called reformation and that we would more likely nowadays call renewal.
7. The Puritans made me aware that all theology is also spirituality in the sense that it has an influence, good or bad, positive or negative, on its recipients' relationship or lack of relationship to God.

Afterword: Puritans as great thinkers, worshipers, hopers, warriors

Leland Ryken: *Worldly Saints*

The Genius of Puritanism – What the Puritans did Best

1. The God-centred life – putting God first
2. All of life is God's – living in two worlds – both equally real
3. Seeing God in the commonplace – in the ordinary events
4. The momentousness of life – everything matters
5. Living in a spirit of expectancy – exhilarated with hope
6. The practical impulse in Puritanism – making a difference in people's lives
7. Getting back to basics – the heart of the matter, inner reality
8. The balanced Christian life – head and heart, theory and practice, this world and next, active and contemplative, grace and holy living
9. A simplicity that dignifies – worship, lifestyle, preaching
10. A sure foundation – Bible

DF – Puritan Reading – 1977-87

1. Doctrine / experience / conduct – depth in all three
 2. Knew Bible
 3. OT / NT continuity and discontinuity
 4. World-affirming – serious about life AND longing for glory
 5. Preaching – to whole men – esp to conscience
 6. Solid, earnest, serious, precise, pursue things to the end
 7. Ministry – preaching, prayer, pastoring
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1. Sibbes – *vol 5* – whole new world of application
 2. Owen – *vols 1-2* - knew Bible – devotion to Christ – looking up references
 3. Burroughs – *Precious Jewel* – Christ is enough
 4. Westminster Confession – precision and depth
 5. Baxter's *Reformed Pastor* – this is serious; (and Alleine's Alarm)
 6. Henry – *Commentary* - Christ in all the Scriptures
 7. John Flavel – *Fountain of Life* - Christ-centredness
 8. Charnock – *Existence and Attributes* - incomprehensibility of God
 9. Edwards – *The End for which God created the world* - Glory of God
 10. Watson – *Body of Divinity* – 16 ways to hallow God's name
 11. Rutherford – *Letters* - love-hate; Crown-rights; delight in Christ

E. A taste of the Puritans

1. *The Character of an Old English Puritan, or Non-Conformist* - John Geree - 1646

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, and therein he did not what was good in his own, but in God's sight, making the word of God the rule of his worship. He highly esteemed order in the House of God: but would not under colour of that submit to superstitious rites, which are superfluous, and perish in their use. He revered Authority keeping within its sphere: but durst not under pretence of subjection to the higher powers, worship God after the traditions of men. He made conscience of all God's ordinances, though some he esteemed of more consequence.

He was much in prayer; with it he began and closed the day. In it he was much exercised in his closet, family and public assembly. 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. Therefore in that circumstance of the church 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. The word read he esteemed of more authority, but the word preached of more efficiency.

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: yet could he distinguish between studied plainness and negligent rudeness. He accounted perspicuity the best grace of a preacher: And that method best, which was most helpful to the understanding, affection, and memory. To which ordinarily he esteemed none so conducive as that by doctrine, reason and use. 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. He was not satisfied with prayers without preaching: which if it were wanting at home, he would seek abroad: yet would he not by absence discourage his minister, if faithful, though another might have quicker gifts. A lecture he esteemed, though not necessary, yet a blessing, and would read such an opportunity with some pains and loss.

The Lord's Day he esteemed a divine ordinance, and rest on it necessary, so far as it conduced to holiness. He was very conscientious in observance of that day as the mart day of the soul. He was careful to remember it, to get house, and heart in order for it and when it came, he was studious to improve it. He redeems the morning from superfluous sleep, and watches the whole day over his thoughts and words, not only to restrain them from wickedness, but worldliness. All parts of the day were like holy to him, and his care was continued in it in variety of holy duties: what he heard in public, he repeated in private, to whet it upon himself and family. 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. He esteemed it an ordinance of nearest communion with Christ, and so requiring most exact preparation. His first care was in the examination of himself: yet as an act of office or charity, he had an eye on others. He endeavored to have the scandalous cast out of communion: but he cast not out himself, because the scandalous were suffered by the negligence of others. He condemned that superstition and vanity of Popish mock-fasts; yet neglected not an occasion to humble his soul by right fasting: He abhorred the popish doctrine of opus operatum in the action. And in practice rested in no performance, but what was done in spirit and truth.

He thought God had left a rule in his word for discipline, and that aristocratical by elders, not monarchical by bishops, nor democratical by the people. 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, yet unchurched not those where it was otherwise. Perfection in churches he thought a thing rather to be desired, than hoped for. And so he expected not a church state without all defects. 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.

He put not holiness in churches, as in the temple of the Jews; but counted them convenient like their

synagogues. He would have them kept decent, not magnificent: knowing that the gospel requires not outward pomp. 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: yet did he distinguish between authority and lusts of magistrates, to that he submitted, but in these he durst not be a servant of men, being bought with a price. 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; yet his refusal was modest and with submission to penalties, unless he could procure indulgence from authority.

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, both in regard of persons and exercises, admitting none into it but such as feared God; and laboring that those that were borne in it, might be born again unto God. He blessed his family morning and evening by the word and prayer and took care to perform those ordinances in the best season. He brought up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and commanded his servants to keep the way of the Lord. He set up discipline in his family, as he desired it in the church, not only reproving but restraining vileness in his.

He was conscientious of equity as well as piety knowing that unrighteousness is abomination as well as ungodliness. He was cautious in promising, but careful in performing, counting his word no less engagement than his bond. He was a man of tender heart, not only in regard of his own sin, but others misery, not counting mercy arbitrary, but a necessary duty wherein as he prayed for wisdom to direct him, so he studied for cheerfulness and bounty to act.

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, neither exceeding his degree in civility, nor declining what suited with Christianity, desiring in all things to express gravity. 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 conquers who suffers."]

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.

2. *A Christian Alphabet* – Thomas Taylor

see separate doc.

F. Further appreciation: “Why We Need the Puritans” - J. I. Packer

1. The answer, in one word, is **maturity**. Maturity is a compound of wisdom, goodwill, resilience, and creativity. They were great souls serving a great God. In them clear-headed passion and warm-hearted compassion combined. Visionary and practical, idealistic and realistic too, goal-oriented and methodical, they were great believers, great hoppers, great doers, and great sufferers.
2. In what ways can they do this? Let me suggest some specifics. First, there are lessons for us in the **integration of their daily lives**. As their Christianity was all-embracing, so their living was all of a piece. Nowadays we would call their lifestyle holistic: all awareness, activity, and enjoyment, all 'use of the creatures' and development of personal powers and creativity, was integrated in the single purpose of honoring God by appreciating all his gifts and making everything 'holiness to the Lord'. There was for them no disjunction between sacred and secular; all creation, so far as they were concerned, was sacred, and all activities, of whatever kind, must be sanctified, that is, done to the glory of God. So, in their heavenly-minded ardour, the Puritans became men and women of order, matter-of-fact and down-to-earth, prayerful, purposeful, practical. Seeing life whole, they integrated contemplation with action, worship with work, labour with rest, love of God with love of neighbour and of self, personal with social rest, love of God with love of neighbour and of self, personal with social identity, and the wide spectrum of relational responsibilities with each other, in a thoroughly conscientious and thought-out way. In this thoroughness they were extreme, that is to say far more thorough than we are, but in their blending of the whole wide range of Christian duties set forth in Scripture they were eminently balanced. They lived by 'method' (we would say, by a rule of life), planning and proportioning their time with care, not so much to keep bad things out as to make sure that they got all good and important things in - necessary wisdom, then as now, for busy people! We today, who tend to live unplanned lives at random in a series of non-communicating compartments and who hence feel swamped and distracted most of the time, could learn much from the Puritans at this point.
3. Second, there are lessons for us in the **quality of their spiritual experience**. In the Puritans' communion with God, as Jesus Christ was central, so Holy Scripture was supreme. By Scripture, as God's word of instruction about divine-human relationships, they sought to live, and here, too, they were conscientiously methodical. Knowing themselves to be creatures of thought, affection, and will, and knowing that God's way to the human heart (the will) is via the human head (the mind), the Puritans practised meditation, discursive and systematic, on the whole range of biblical truth as they saw it applying to themselves. Puritan meditation on Scripture was modeled on the Puritan sermon; in meditation the Puritan would seek to search and challenge his heart, stir his affections to hate sin and love righteousness, and encourage himself with God's promises, just as Puritan preachers would do from the pulpit. This rational, resolute, passionate piety was conscientious without becoming obsessive, law-oriented without lapsing into legalism, and expressive of Christian liberty without any shameful lurches into license. The Puritans knew that Scripture is the unalterable rule of holiness, and never allowed themselves to forget it. Knowing also the dishonesty and deceitfulness of fallen human hearts, they cultivated humility and self-suspicion as abiding attitudes, and examined themselves regularly for spiritual blind spots and lurking inward evils. They may not be called morbid or introspective on this account, however; on the contrary, they found the discipline of self-examination by Scripture (not the same thing as introspection, let us note), followed by the discipline of confessing and forsaking sin and renewing one's gratitude to Christ for his pardoning mercy, to be a source of great inner peace and joy. We today, who know to our cost that we have unclear minds, uncontrolled affections, and unstable wills when it comes to serving God, and who again and again find ourselves being imposed on by irrational, emotional romanticism disguised as super-spirituality, could profit much from the Puritans' example at this point too.
4. Third, there are lessons for us in their **passion for effective action**. Though the Puritans, like the rest of the human race, had their dreams of what could and should be, they were decidedly not the kind of people that we could call 'dreamy'! They had no time for the idleness of the lazy or passive person who leaves it to others to change the world! They were men of action in the pure Reformed mould - crusading activists without a jot of self-reliance; workers for God who depended utterly on God to work in and through them, and who always gave God the praise for anything they did that in retrospect seemed to them to have been right; gifted men who prayed earnestly that God would enable them to use their powers, not for self-display, but for his praise. None of them wanted to be revolutionaries in church or state, though some of them reluctantly became such; all of them, however, longed to be effective change agents for God wherever shifts from sin to sanctity were called for. So Cromwell and his army made long, strong prayers before each battle, and preachers made long, strong prayers privately before ever venturing into the pulpit, and laymen made long, strong prayers before tackling any matter of importance (marriage, business deals, major purchases, or whatever). Today, however, Christians in the West are found to be on the whole passionless, passive, and, one fears, prayerless; cultivating an ethos which encloses personal piety in a pietistic cocoon, they leave public affairs to go their own way and neither expect nor for the most part seek influence beyond their own Christian circle. Where the Puritans prayed and laboured for a holy England and New England, sensing that where privilege is neglected and unfaithfulness reigns national judgement threatens, modern Christians gladly settle for conventional social respectability and, having done so, look no further. Surely it is obvious that at this point also the Puritans have a great deal to teach us.
5. Fourth, there are lessons for us in their **program for family stability**. It is hardly too much to say that the Puritans created the Christian family in the English-speaking world. The Puritan ethic of marriage was to look not for a partner whom you do love passionately at this moment, but rather for one whom you can love steadily as your best friend for life, and then to proceed with God's help to do just that. The Puritan ethic of nurture was to train up children in the way they should go, to care for their bodies and souls together, and to educate them for sober, godly, socially useful adult living. The Puritan ethic of home life was based on maintaining order, courtesy, and family worship. Goodwill, patience, consistency, and an encouraging attitude were seen as the essential domestic virtues. In

an age of routine discomforts, rudimentary medicine without pain-killers, frequent bereavements (most families lost at least as many children as they reared), an average life expectancy of just under thirty years, and economic hardship for almost all save merchant princes and landed gentry, family life was a school for character in every sense, and the fortitude with which Puritans resisted the all-too-familiar temptation to relieve pressure from the world by brutality at home, and laboured to honor God in their families despite all, merits supreme praise. At home the Puritans showed themselves (to use my overworked term) mature, accepting hardships and disappointments realistically as from God and refusing to be daunted or soured by any of them. Also, it was at home in the first instance that the Puritan layman practised evangelism and ministry. 'His family he endeavoured to make a Church,' wrote Geree, '...labouring that those that were born in it, might be born again to God.' In an era in which family life has become brittle even among Christians, with chicken-hearted spouses taking the easy course of separation rather than working at their relationship, and narcissistic parents spoiling their children materially while neglecting them spiritually, there is once more much to be learned from the Puritans' very different ways.

6. Fifth, there are lessons to be learned from **their sense of human worth**. Through believing in a great God (the God of Scripture, undiminished and undomesticated), they gained a vivid awareness of the greatness of moral issues, of eternity, and of the human soul. Hamlet's 'What a piece of work is man!' is a very Puritan sentiment; the wonder of human individuality was something that they felt keenly. Though, under the influence of their medieval heritage, which told them that error has no rights, they did not in every case manage to respect those who differed publicly from them, their appreciation of man's dignity as the creature made to be God's friend was strong, and so in particular was their sense of the beauty and nobility of human holiness. In the collectivised urban anthill where most of us live nowadays the sense of each individual's eternal significance is much eroded, and the Puritan spirit is at this point a corrective from which we can profit greatly.
7. Sixth, there are lessons to be learned from the Puritans' **ideal of church renewal**. To be sure, 'renewal' was not a word that they used; they spoke only of 'reformation' and 'reform', which words suggest to our twentieth-century minds a concern that is limited to the externals of the church's orthodoxy, order, worship forms and disciplinary code. But when the Puritans preached, published, and prayed for 'reformation' they had in mind, not indeed less than this, but far more. On the title page of the original edition of Richard Baxter's 'The Reformed Pastor', the word 'reformed' was printed in much larger type than any other, and one does not have to read far before discovering that for Baxter a 'reformed' pastor was not one who campaigned for Calvinism but one whose ministry to his people as preacher, teacher, catechist and role-model showed him to be, as we would say, 'revived' or 'renewed'. The essence of this kind of 'reformation' was enrichment of understanding of God's truth, arousal of affections God-ward, increase of ardour in one's devotions, and more love, joy, and firmness of Christian purpose in one's calling and personal life. In line with this, the ideal for the church was that through 'reformed' clergy all the members of each congregation should be 'reformed' - brought, that is, by God's grace without disorder into a state of what we would call revival, so as to be truly and thoroughly converted, theologically orthodox and sound, spiritually alert and expectant, in character terms wise and steady, ethically enterprising and obedient, and humbly but joyously sure of their salvation. This was the goal at which Puritan pastoral ministry aimed throughout, both in English parishes and in the 'gathered' churches of congregational type that multiplied in the mid-seventeenth century.
8. It must by now be apparent that the great Puritan pastor-theologians - Owen, Baxter, Goodwin, Howe, Perkins, Sibbes, Brooks, Watson, Gurnall, Flavel, Bunyan, Manton, and others like them - were men of outstanding intellectual power, as well as spiritual insight. In them mental habits fostered by sober scholarship were linked with a flaming zeal for God and a minute acquaintance with the human heart. All their work displays this unique fusion of gifts and graces. In thought and outlook they were **radically God-centered**. Their appreciation of God's sovereign majesty was profound, and their reverence in handling his written word was deep and constant. They were patient, thorough, and methodical in searching the Scriptures, and their grasp of the various threads and linkages in the web of revealed truth was firm and clear. They understood most richly the ways of God with men, the glory of Christ the Mediator, and the work of the Spirit in the believer and the church.
9. And their knowledge was **no mere theoretical orthodoxy**. They sought to 'reduce to practice' (their own phrase) all that God taught them. They yoked their consciences to his word, disciplining themselves to bring all activities under the scrutiny of Scripture, and to demand a theological, as distinct from a merely pragmatic, justification for everything that they did. They applied their understanding of the mind of God to every branch of life, seeing the church, the family, the state, the arts and sciences, the world of commerce and industry, no less than the devotions of the individual, as so many spheres in which God must be served and honored. They saw life whole, for they saw its Creator as Lord of each department of it, and their purpose was that 'holiness to the Lord' might be written over it in its entirety.
10. Nor as this all. **Knowing God, the Puritans also knew man**. They saw him as in origin a noble being, made in God's image to rule God's earth, but now tragically brutified and brutalised by sin. They viewed sin in the triple light of God's law, Lordship, and holiness, and so saw it as transgression and guilt, as rebellion and usurpation, and as uncleanness, corruption, and inability for good. Seeing this, and knowing the ways whereby the Spirit brings sinners to faith and new life in Christ, and leads saints, on the one hand to grow into their Savior's image, and, on the other, to learn their total dependence on grace, the great Puritans became superb pastors. The depth and unctiveness of the 'practical and experimental' expositions in the pulpit was no more outstanding than was their skill in the study of applying spiritual physic to sick souls. From Scripture they mapped the often bewildering terrain of the life of faith and fellowship with God with great thoroughness (see 'Pilgrim's Progress' for a pictorial gazetteer), and their acuteness and wisdom in diagnosing spiritual malaise and setting out the appropriate biblical remedies was outstanding.

11. What Puritan emphases can **establish and settle restless experientialists**? These, to start with. First, the stress on God-centeredness as a divine requirement that is central to the discipline of self-denial. Second, the insistence on the primacy of the mind, and on the impossibility of obeying biblical truth that one has not yet understood. Third, the demand for humility, patience, and steadiness at all times, and for an acknowledgement that Holy Spirit's main ministry is not to give thrills but to create in us Christlike character. Fourth, the recognition that feelings go up and down, and that God frequently tries us by leading us through wastes of emotional flatness. Fifth, the singling out of worship as life's primary activity. Sixth, the stress on our need of regular self-examination by Scripture, in terms set by Psalm 139:23-24. Seventh, the realisation that sanctified suffering bulks large in God's plan for his children's growth in grace. No Christian tradition of teaching administers this purging and strengthening medicine with more masterful authority than does that of the Puritans, whose own dispensing of it nurtured a marvellously strong and resilient type of Christian for a century and more, as we have seen.

12. But when we ask what emphases Puritan tradition contains to **counter arid intellectualism**, a whole series of points springs to view. First, true religion claims the affections as well as the intellect; it is essentially, in Richard Baxter's phrase, 'heart-work'. Second, theological truth is for practice. William Perkins defined theology as the science of living blessedly for ever; William Ames called it the science of living to God. Third, conceptual knowledge kills if one does not move on from knowing notions to knowing the realities to which they refer - in this case, from knowing about God to a relational acquaintance with God himself. Fourth, faith and repentance, issuing in a life of love and holiness, that is, of gratitude expressed in goodwill and good works, are explicitly called for in the gospel. Fifth, the Spirit is given to lead us into close companionship with others in Christ. Sixth, the discipline of discursive meditation is meant to keep us ardent and adoring in our love affair with God. Seventh, it is ungodly and scandalous to become a firebrand and cause division in the church, and it is ordinarily nothing more reputable than spiritual pride in its intellectual form that leads men to create parties and splits. The great Puritans were as humble-minded and warm-hearted they were clear-headed, as fully oriented to people as they were to Scripture, and as passionate for peace as they were for truth. They would certainly have diagnosed today's fixated Christian intellectualists as spiritually stunted, not in their zeal for the form of sound words but in their lack of zeal for anything else; and the thrust of Puritan teaching about God's truth in man's life is still potent to ripen such souls into whole and mature human beings.

13. What have the Puritans to say to us that might serve to **heal the disaffected casualties of modern evangelical goofiness**? Anyone who reads the writings of the Puritan authors will find in them much that helps in this way. Puritan authors regularly tell us, first, of the 'mystery' of God: that our God is too small, that the real God cannot be put without remainder into a man-made conceptual box so as to be fully understood; and that he was, is, and always will be bewilderingly inscrutable in his dealing with those who trust and love him, so that 'losses and crosses', that is, bafflement and disappointment in relation to particular hopes one has entertained, must be accepted as a recurring element in one's life of fellowship with him. Then they tell us, second, of the 'love' of God: that it is a love that redeems, converts, sanctifies, and ultimately glorifies sinners, and that Calvary was the one place in human history where it was fully and unambiguously revealed, and that in relation to our own situation we may know for certain that nothing can separate us from that love (Rom.8:38f), although no situation in this world will ever be free from flies in the ointment and thorns in the bed. Developing the theme of divine love the Puritans tell us, third, of the 'salvation' of God: that the Christ who put away our sins and brought us God's pardon is leading us through this world to a glory for which we are even now being prepared by the instilling of desire for it and capacity to enjoy it, and that holiness here, in the form of consecrated service and loving obedience through thick and thin, is the high road to happiness hereafter. Following this they tell us, fourth, about 'spiritual conflict,' the many ways in which the world, the flesh and the devil seek to lay us low; fifth, about the 'protection' of God, whereby he overrules and sanctifies the conflict, often allowing one evil to touch our lives in order thereby to shield us from greater evils; and, sixth, about the 'glory' of God, which it becomes our privilege to further by our celebrating of his grace, by our proving of his power under perplexity and pressure, by totally resigning ourselves to his good pleasure, and by making him our joy and delight at all times.