

Study 1

Thomas Watson: 1620 - 1686 (John Bunyan: 1628 - 1668)

Puritans; a dominant Protestant group in English domestic life from 1567 to 1660. Their name came from desire to **purify** the C of E of customs, ideas, doctrines without Biblical basis. Therefore, they sought to transform rather than overthrow the Anglican church. Opposed episcopacy, Book of Common Prayer and RC ritual like wearing vestments, and the ring in marriage ceremonies. They opposed saints' days, godparents at baptism, clerical absolution, sign of the cross, kneeling for communion and use of surplice by minister. Many Puritans advocated Presbyterian order and Calvinism. Many legal, gentry and businessmen were Puritans. Cambridge and Oxford became centres of influence.

'There was nothing more remarkable about the Puritans than their emphasis upon THE CONSCIENCE'. (M L-J) The Puritan conscience was a characteristic term. 'Self-examination is the setting up of a court in conscience and keeping a register there, that by strict scrutiny a man may know how things stand between God and his own soul ... A good Christian begins as it were the day of judgment here in his own soul.' Plus, their sermons were never finished until their 'application.' They deplored a mere academic, theoretical view of the Truth. 'Puritans understood that a mindless Christianity fosters a spineless Christianity. An anti-intellectual gospel quickly becomes an empty, formless gospel that doesn't get beyond "felt needs."' **"WE MUST GO WITH THE STICK OF DIVINE TRUTH AND BEAT EVERY BUSH BEHIND WHICH A SINNER HIDES, UNTIL LIKE ADAM WHO HID, HE STANDS BEFORE GOD IN HIS NAKEDNESS."**

Joel Beeke & Mark Jones: 'A person with a good conscience has an enlightened, tender, and faithful conscience, and therefore can face death with peace. At the end of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Mr. Honest is about to cross the River Jordan. He had asked Good Conscience to meet him at the river, and Good Conscience was there to help him through the final trial of death. Likewise, it is through the gift of a good conscience that God answers Simeon's, prayer in Luke 2: 29, saying, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace" ' **John Flavel**: (1628-1691) 'The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying.' They taught that; **'preparing to die is the first step in learning to live.'**

Puritans emphasised: Scriptures & Dedicated Christian scholarship, Trinitarian theology, electing grace of God, the Cross, applicatory work of Holy Spirit in lives of

sinners. The church & Biblical worship, Scripture in all areas of life, personal conversion (John 3:3 & James 2: 17).

1: 17th Century: Monarchs; (Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary) Queen Elizabeth 1, died 1603; James VI Scotland & James 1, 1625; **AV Bible 1611**; Charles I, 1649 beheaded; Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, 1653–58; Charles II, 1660–1685; James II, 1685–88, deposed, last RC Monarch. (His 15-year-old Protestant daughter Mary II married William of Orange,) [known in Northern Ireland & Scotland as ‘King Billy’], invited to take English throne, installed 1689; Battle of Boyne 1690. James defeated, exiled to France protected by Louis XIV. Mary died 1694, William in 1702.

Musicians & Composers: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748. Henry Purcell, 1659_1695. Jeremiah Clark, 1674–1707. Antonio Vivaldi, 1678–1741. Claudio Monteverdi, 1567–1643. Johann Pachelbel, 1653–1706. Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685–1750. Arcangelo Corelli, 1653–1713. Tomaso Albinoni 1671–1751. Georg Philipp Telemann, 1681–1767. Giovanni Gabrieli, 1557–1612. George Frideric Handel, 1685–1759.

2: Great Ejection: After restoration of Charles II; St. Bartholomew’s Day, August 24, 1662, [Black Bartholomew] in co-sequence of the Act of Uniformity passed by Parliament in May that year, more than 2,500 ministers were ‘ejected’ or expelled from their churches, residences, incomes because they would not conform to use of The Book of Common Prayer as the uniform order for worship in the C. of E.

3: Puritanism: ‘The word “Puritan” originated in the 1560s as a pejorative hurled at people who wanted further reformation in the Church of England.’ Puritans honoured God above all and gave everyone his due with the Word of God his rule in worship. **J. I. Packer:** “Puritanism was an evangelical holiness movement seeking to implement its vision of spiritual renewal, national and personal, in the state, the church, the home; in education, evangelism and economics; in individual discipleship and devotion and in pastoral care and competence.’”

4: Thomas Watson was born in Yorkshire, a serious scholar who obtained BA at Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1639 and MA, 1642. After living for a while with Puritan family he went to London as lecturer for ten years at St Stephen’s, Wallbrook, then rector for six years. He married Abigail Beadle in 1647, whose father held Puritan convictions as a minister in Essex. During the next thirteen years they had seven children; four of them died young. During the Civil War, Watson embraced Presbyterian views. However, he had sympathy for the king and went to Oliver Cromwell with other Presbyterians to protest against the execution of Charles I. In 1651, with a few others he was imprisoned for being involved in a plot to restore the monarchy. In 1652, he was reinstated to his Wallbrook ministry. Ten years later he was ejected from his pastorate with the passing of the Act of Uniformity. (**The Act of Uniformity 1662** is an Act of the Parliament of England. It prescribed the form of

public prayers, administration of sacraments, and other rites of the Established Church of England, according to the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Book of [Common Prayer](#). Adherence to this was required in order to hold any office in government or the church, although the 1662 edition of the [Book of Common Prayer](#) prescribed by the Act was so new that most people had never even seen a copy. The Act also required that the Book of Common Prayer 'be truly and exactly Translated into the British or Welsh Tongue'. It also explicitly required episcopal ordination for all ministers, i.e. deacons, priests and bishops, which had to be reintroduced since the Puritans had abolished many features of the Church during the Civil War.)

As an immediate result of this Act, over 2,000 clergymen refused to take the oath and were expelled from the Church of England in what became known as the Great Ejection of 1662. Although there had already been ministers outside the established church, this created the concept of non-conformity, with a substantial section of English society excluded from public affairs for a century and a half. However, Watson continued to preach in barns, woods, homes, wherever! By 1600, London's population was estimated at 400,000. 1666 was the Great Fire of London, which broke out in a Pudding Lane bakery just after midnight on Sunday 2nd September. The fire swept through central London and lasted until Thursday 6th. The medieval city of London inside the old Roman city wall was gutted. The Great Fire had demographic, social, political and cultural impact and caused the largest dislocation of the city's residential structure until the Blitz. Allegations that Catholics started the fire were used as political propaganda by opponents of the Court of Charles II.

(The **Popish Plot** was a fictitious conspiracy invented by [Titus Oates](#) that between 1678 and 1681 gripped the Kingdoms of England and Scotland in anti-[Catholic](#) hysteria. Oates alleged that there was an extensive Catholic conspiracy to assassinate [Charles II](#), accusations that led to the executions of at least 22 men and precipitated the [Exclusion Bill Crisis](#). Oates's intricate web of accusations fell apart, leading to his arrest and conviction for perjury.)

After the Great Fire, Thomas Watson used a large room for public worship, available to anyone wishing to attend. He obtained a license for Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate from Sir John Langham, a nonconformist patron. After preaching for three years, he was joined by Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), until Charnock's death. Watson kept ministering until his health failed; he retired to Barnston in Essex and died suddenly in 1686 while praying. He was buried in the same grave as his father-in-law who had ministered in Barnston. 'Watson's depth of doctrine, clarity of expression, warmth of spirituality, love of application and gift of illustration enhanced his reputation as a preacher and writer. His books are still widely read today.' (J. Beeke & R. Pederson)

A Body of Divinity. Banner of Truth Trust. Watson's *magnum opus*, published after his death and his most famous work. Follows the question-and-answer format of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, with 176 sermons on Christianity's essential teachings. Included also; *The Lord's Prayer* and *The Ten Commandments*.

The Doctrine of Repentance. Puritan Paperback, Banner of Truth trust. 1668 & 2012. 'The two great graces essential to a saint in this life are faith and repentance... Repentance is never out of season... Repentance is purgative... It is better to go with difficulty to heaven than with ease to hell... Repentance is pure gospel grace.'

Gleanings from Thomas Watson. He had the gift of presenting profound doctrinal truth in vivid images and colourful metaphors; He who is ashamed of Christ is a shame to Christ... Worldly sorrows hasten our funerals... They that bear the cross patiently shall wear the crown triumphantly.

Heaven Taken by Storm. Based on Matthew 11; 12, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force." How to use the various means of grace. How the Christian is to take the kingdom of heaven by holy violence through the reading and exposition of Scripture, prayer, meditation, self-examination, conversation and keeping the Lord's Day. Explains how the believer is to battle against self, Satan, and the world and counters objections and hindrances to offering such violence.

Religion Our True Interest. His notes on Malachi 3: 16-18, with helpful teaching on religious conversation, God-centred thinking, God's disposition toward His people, and the fear of God which Watson defines as 'reverencing and adoring God's holiness and setting ourselves always under His sacred inspection.'