

The Origins and Status of Puritanism
In England Under Elizabeth I

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Elizabethan Puritanism was a movement comprised of lay people and clerics dedicated to reform the Church of England. The Puritans were determined to do away with all ceremonial functions as well as church organizations which reminded them of the Roman Catholic Church. The Puritans had hoped that Elizabeth would reform the church to their liking but she only insisted on reforms which the Puritans saw as mediocre compromises. To combat this the Puritans soon organized themselves into a distinct group in the 1560's, the early years of Elizabeth's reign, to demand church reform. The term Puritan did not officially appear until the year 1564 when it first began to appear in print. The Puritans main complaint was that Elizabeth had failed to heed their demands, and had ignored the perfect model of the church they had set before her eyes. The battle-cry of the Puritan was, "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Knappen p.171). Since the Puritans viewed the Scriptures as the ultimate and only authority to be obeyed in religious matters, they felt they could not go along with many of Elizabeth's religious compromises. The political force of the Puritans can best be understood in the statement found in the Additional Manuscripts in the British Museum:

the authority that the princes have over the church is to defend it, and to seek the profit thereof, rather than a prerogative to burden it with the superfluous and hurtful ceremonies at their pleasure (Collinson p.27).

The Puritans looked to the Bible as the sole source of authority in religious matters. The Puritans believed that if a human authority did not follow the dictates of the Bible then

that authority was to be resisted (Collinson p.28). This was to be a bone of contention between the Puritans and Elizabeth. She was determined to rule England as she saw fit. She made every effort to control the church in order to insure the religious and political order of her reign (Haller p.7).

The Puritans were strongest in London, East Anglia, Lincolnshire, the West Riding, the Midlands and the South-West. The strong centers of Puritanism were to be found in the large cities and the cloth-weaving centers of England. The Elizabethan Puritans consisted of a sizable contingent of merchants, shopkeepers, and skilled workers. Out of the total population of England by the middle of Elizabeth's reign, at least fifteen percent were considered to be Puritan. Many of England's country gentry were found to be supportive of the Puritan movement. The English country gentry were now sending their sons to English universities such as the Oxford Colleges to receive an education under such men as Laurence Humphrey(1527?-1590), President of Magdalen College, Oxford and a leading intellectual leader of Puritanism (Collinson p.54).

The educated classes provided the bulwark of Puritan support, both financially and in terms of moral support. Puritanism seems to have been attractive to the middle class because it required a certain amount of education, which they had, and it made them feel as if they had a certain sense of independence, particularly from the Crown. Puritanism enabled men to stand up for what they believed in and it placed in

their hands some knowledge of the Bible. This is important because it gave these men some sense of self-esteem. It made them feel that in religious affairs their beliefs counted. A great many of the lay leaders of the Elizabethan Puritan movement were some of the most influential men in Elizabethan England. Sir Francis Knollys, Sir Walter Mildmay, Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, Sir Francis Walsingham, Robert Beale, and the Queen's cousin Henry Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon who was considered a major leader of the Elizabethan Puritan movement in the Midlands and the south-west (Dickens p. 316).

The Elizabethan Puritans were not men and women who simply arrived out of nowhere to reform the Church of England. Their movement stems out of a desire for religious reform which was evident even in the fifteenth century.

One of the first Englishman who sought reform within the church was John Wycliffe(d.1384). He was from Northern England and was noted for his sincere desire for reform. Wycliffe denied the validity of church doctrines such as transubstantiation, claiming that Christ was only spiritually present in the Eucharist. He also denied the notion of papal supremacy, clerical celibacy, and monasticism. Wycliffe believed that the Bible should be the primary source of belief and that it should be available to all men. His beliefs were passed along in pamphlets to townsmen, merchants, and the country gentry. They possessed an education to comprehend the documents as well as providing much needed financial support.

Those who accepted Wycliffe's doctrines became known as "Lollards". This is a Middle Dutch term which means "mutterer" or "mumbler." In the Netherlands it was applied to those who held unorthodox religious beliefs. The Lollards in England soon began to experience persecution since they denounced church dogma and soon had to go underground especially with their distribution of literature (Dickens p.22-24). The Lollards are significant because they foreshadowed the Puritan movement. The Puritans held many Lollard beliefs such as their denial of papal supremacy and the importance of a Bible in the vernacular. The Lollards and the Puritans were both dissenting minorities who were repressed and yet attempted to reform the church, by such means as the distribution of literature. —

Following in the tradition of John Wycliffe in believing that the Bible should be accessible to all was William Tyndale(1492-1536). He was born in Gloucestershire, studied Latin and Greek at Oxford, and sincerely hoped to put the Bible into the hands of the people (Neil p.54). Tyndale soon became involved in a group known as the "Christian Brethren". This sect was responsible for smuggling in Protestant publications from the continent as well as financing them, a tradition from the Lollards. Tyndale's desire to place the Bible in the hands of the people led him to Wittenburg, Germany in 1524 where he planned to translate the Bible. Wittenburg was the home of Martin Luther(1483-1546), who was leading the Protestant Reformation in Germany at the time and which later spread to

Scandinavia. This effort was solely financed by merchants from London. This is significant because the Puritans were to receive financial assistance and moral support from London merchants also. Tyndale signifies future Puritan dissent. Tyndale for example disobeyed the King by leaving England without his permission, and the Puritans in the future were to disobey many of Elizabeth's church policies. Disobedience was an important factor in the Puritan movement for they had to take certain steps to insure that they were heard. In March of 1526 the first copies of this Bible were smuggled into England. The distribution of the Tyndale Bible was an underground operation so it could escape the watchful eyes of the English Bishops (Dickens p.70-72).

These activities of the church reformers were taking place during the reign of Henry VIII(1509-1547). Henry considered himself to be an orthodox Catholic and would not allow this Bible to be published. Between 1529 and 1532 those who were caught in the illegal distribution of the Bible such as Richard Bayfield and James Bainham were seized and executed. Tyndale also distributed his own works such as his preface to the New Testament or his pamphlet on the Sermon on the Mount (Neil p.37).

In August of 1535 for the first time in English history a Bible was published in the vernacular. It was the translation of Miles Coverdale(d.1569) who based a good deal of it on the translation which Tyndale had accomplished in 1526. This event

is significant in that for the first time the Crown was giving in to one of the Reformers demands to place the Bible in the hands of the people. Up to this event the distribution of religious literature was done entirely underground. The manpower and money needed to distribute the literature had always come from the merchants and tradesman. Finally some support was to be found from the government (Dickens p.130-131).

In 1540 Thomas Gardiner (1483?-1555), became Henry's chief minister. Gardiner was Bishop of Winchester and the government policy now became one of Anglo-Roman tendencies. Papal authority was no longer recognized and monasticism was abolished. Old church ceremonies remained in the form of confession, images, transubstantiation, and a Latin service. These reforms though were still not enough for those reformers who wanted to completely strip the church of its Roman vestiges. Those churchmen who desired reform, and the Puritans came out of this group of non-conformers, were given the choice to recant or suffer persecution. These two alternatives caused many Englishmen to flee England for the European continent (Knappen p.55).

Upon Henry's death on January 27, 1547, Edward VI ascended the throne and ruled till 1553. He moved the Church in a more radical Protestant direction, such as his support for the issuance of the Second Book of Common Prayer. This book allowed no albs, vestments, or copes to be used by priests in religious

services. To do away with these items was significant since their presence would remind the reformers of Roman Catholicism and that the church was yet partially restored. Edward's most radical change was the "Black Rubric". This allowed no one to kneel to receive communion. Edward's reign allowed for a greater freedom of reforming thought for the first time in English history. These changes under Edward served to brighten the hopes of those who wanted radical church reform, and the Puritans were to come out of these reformers (Knappen p.65).

Mary ascended the throne and ruled England from 1553 to 1558. In six months England was a Catholic nation and within eighteen months England was again loyal to the Pope. The Mass was brought back. Many Englishmen fled to Geneva, Frankfort, and Strasbourg. Mary successfully destroyed the Henrician and Edwardian Reformations. 1555 saw the return of the heresy laws. Three hundred people were put to death. One-third were clergy and about sixty of these "martyrs" were women. These burnings did nothing more than to generate a deep hatred of Rome. Mary's persecution of religious non-conformists served to strengthen them. Many fled, as stated above, to major centers of reforming thought in Europe only to later return to Elizabeth's England ready and hopeful for a major reformation (Erickson p.176).

Elizabeth I ascended the throne on November 17, 1558. England in thirty years had seen a great deal of religious turmoil with the reforms of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary. The first task of Elizabeth was to decide what to do about

religion. Upon Elizabeth's ascent to the throne, all those who had fled the persecutions of Mary began to return. They returned with so much strength that Elizabeth was really unable to fully control them. Due to this strong reforming element, Elizabeth attempted to settle the main issues of religion within her first five months as sovereign. The church policy of Elizabeth was to try to maintain a sense of balance between the different reforming factions of the day (Haller p.7). The Elizabethan religious settlement was the result of these efforts to establish a middle course of reform and to achieve a balance among the reforming parties. Elizabeth would have preferred not to have to rely on Parliament to achieve her religious reforms but she had to concede to them since her father Henry VIII and Edward had used Parliament to implement reforms of their own. Henry had passed his Act of Six Articles through Parliament and Edward used Parliament to reform the prayer book twice (Alexander p.21).

To Elizabeth the issue of religion was a bothersome one. Elizabeth desired a church which would be under her control. To the Puritans, when they were formed, this was acceptable since they saw Elizabeth as the opportunity to thoroughly reform the church. The Elizabethan religious settlement was one of moderation, though, and the Puritans soon felt as if their demands were being ignored. The Puritans beliefs did not go along with Elizabeth's as we shall see, and Elizabeth refused to tolerate their non-conformity which she saw as a threat to

her reign. She embarked upon a cautious path in her religious settlement hoping to appease everyone . Elizabeth, early in her reign, issued two Acts of Parliament to accomplish this, the Act of Supremacy of 1559 and the Act of Uniformity of 1559. They only frustrated Puritan hopes for reform because they saw the reform as incomplete, but which Elizabeth saw as the only way to retain her office (Knappen p.168).

Elizabeth's government was determined to control the church. The Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were the means by which she hoped to accomplish this by laying down the structure of the church. The Act of Supremacy restored the Queen as the Supreme Governor of the Church. This legislation repealed all former legislation from the reign of Mary(1553-1558), and it re-established much of Henry VIII's statutes concerning the organization and administration of the church. The Act also included an oath to be taken by all clergy, judges, and all other servants of the Queen, recognizing Elizabeth as the Supreme Governor of the Church. The refusal to take this oath resulted in dismissal from office (Alexander p.49). The Act of Supremacy of 1559 entitled Elizabeth to:

such jurisdictions, priviledges, superiorities, and preeminences spiritual and ecclesiastical, as by any spiritual or ecclesiastical power or authority that heretofore been....exercised or used for the visitation of the ecclesiastical states and persons, and for reformation, order and correction of the same and of all manners of errors, heresies, schisms, abuses, offenses, contempts, and enormities (Collinson p.44).

The Act of Uniformity is a prime example of Elizabeth moving in a Protestant direction. This Act authorized the

publication and use of the Elizabethan Prayer Book. This book was along the lines of the 1552 Prayer Book but with certain noteworthy changes. The Pope was removed from the Litany, the words of administration of communion were altered to balance the memorial aspect of the ritual along with the belief of the real presence of Christ, the Black Rubric which had meant that if one kneels to receive communion that it does not imply a belief in the real presence, this was suppressed, and most significant was clause twelve which brought back the use of clerical vestments, which was to be a source of consternation to the Puritans later (Collinson p.34).

After the issuance of this legislation Elizabeth's chief desire was to see through their implementation. Royal Commissioners were appointed to travel England and Wales to administer the Oath of Supremacy and deliver the Royal Injunctions. These injunctions stipulated that preachers were to be licensed by the bishop and that four sermons a year were to be devoted to the Royal Supremacy. They went on to say that each church was to have a copy of the English Bible, and shrines and images were to be taken away. Some of the injunctions were designed to impede the growth of Protestantism such as a prohibition against the destruction of altars, all religious books and pamphlets were to be licensed by the crown, and all clergymen were to wear, "such seemly habits, garments, and such square caps." (Alexander p.52). These injunctions were to anger the Puritans and would cause them to call for further

religious reformation.

After the issuance of the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity Elizabeth moved to fill the vacant offices of the Marian Bishops who did not take the Oath of Supremacy. Out of the twenty-seven dioceses in England and Wales twenty-five were vacant. Her appointments to these offices were many of the clergy who fled to the Continent to escape persecution under Mary, the Marian Exiles. Some of those appointed were: Thomas Bentham of Coventry and Litchfield(a contributor to the Geneva Bible, a recent translation), Edmund Grindal of London(later of York and Canterbury), Robert Horne of Winchester, John Parkhurst of Norwich, James Pilkington of Durham(a former member of the Scottish reformer John Knox's congregation in Geneva), Edwin Sandys of Worcester, and Edmund Scambler of Peterborough(not an exile but a leader of an underground Protestant congregation in London during Mary's reign) (Collinson p.61).

Elizabeth had given control of about one-third of England's dioceses to men with very strong Protestant if not Puritan inclinations. Their aims were to develop a skilled and highly educated preaching clergy. They wanted to reduce religious pomp and ceremony to the bare minimum. They hoped to introduce into the Church of England the system of Presbyterianism as they found it in Geneva because they felt it was based in Scripture. Bishops would be eliminated, all ministers would be equal, the churches would be organized into

presbyteries and laymen would participate in the organization of the church. Finally the Puritans would establish a state church under the complete control of Parliament. The Puritans hoped to gain control of the Church of England through Parliament which would prove to be impossible since Elizabeth wanted no discussion of religious matters in Parliament (Neil p.112).

These aims of Puritanism were to be a bone of contention to Elizabeth. She would prove to be nothing more than an insurmountable barrier to the Puritan movement. Elizabeth was intent on maintaining her own personal control of the church. Elizabeth was the Supreme Governor of the Church of England and it was to do her bidding and to maintain her policies. J.E. Neale states in Elizabeth and Her Parliaments 1584-1601 that the Puritans, "through the plotting of the Godly brotherhood and their organized group of parliamentary agents, Queen Elizabeth was menaced with revolution in both church and state" (Neil p.115). Elizabeth was not about to let this happen so her consternation with the Puritans is understandable.

A major point of contention which was to develop in the Elizabethan reformation of the Church of England were the beliefs between those who followed Elizabeth's religious settlement which would evolve into Anglicanism by 1593 and those reformers in the church who opposed it, specifically those in the 1560's who became known as the Puritans. When one speaks of the Puritans there can be the misconception that the

Puritans all held to one central doctrine and all their opponents held to another. This was not the case during Elizabeth's reign. Puritanism can be a term which only makes sense if it is applied to those who would not accept the compromises that Elizabeth made in her religious settlement. Elizabeth's settlement did make the church Protestant but as a sixteenth-century pamphleteer said, "The hotter sort of Protestants are called Puritans" (Alexander p. 57).

A major defender of the Elizabethan settlement was Richard Hooker(1554-1600). Hooker was to Anglicanism what Calvin turned out to be to Puritanism, as we shall see. In 1593 Hooker published a work entitled Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. In this work Hooker set forth all the doctrines of Anglicanism. Hooker was the person who finally synthesized all of the reforms of the Church of England, its doctrine and theology, into one cohesive work (Marshall p.4) . It was not till this period of the 1590's that changes in Protestant doctrine as espoused by Calvin began to take place. Up to this time Calvin's doctrines of justification by faith alone and predestination were accepted by the majority of English Protestants. Calvin felt that man must have faith in order to be saved and he cannot save himself only by the works of the Mass and penance. Calvin's theory of predestination is that some men are predestined by God to salvation while all the rest are predestined to eternal damnation. In Elizabeth's reign matters of theology were not really discussed. It was not till

later in English history, under James I and Charles I, that church doctrines were fully qualified (Alexander p.61).

By the 1590's Anglicanism, in the form of the Church of England, restored the opportunity for the people to read the Bible and to worship in their own language. It restored regular communion under both kinds, along with the practice of confirmation by the laying on of the bishop's hands. The orders of bishops, priests and deacons as they existed under Roman Catholicism remained. The liturgical calendar that had always existed under Rome remained. It denied the supremacy of the Pope in spiritual, church and civil affairs, as well as beliefs of purgatory, indulgences, and the intercession of the saints. The Anglicans still recognized ecclesiastical administration and maintained the continuity of this aspect of the church. Many of the above-mentioned practices which Anglicanism preserved were seen by the Puritans as an abomination. This was due to the fact that to them all practices of Roman Catholicism were regarded as superstitious. The Puritans wanted to do away with all the trappings of the Roman liturgy and Anglicanism did not achieve this (Neil p.132).

One controversy which illustrates the annoyance of the Puritans with Elizabeth and her church policy is the Vesterian Controversy 1559-1567. Elizabeth liked the pomp of Roman Catholic ceremonies and she felt that there should be a uniform clerical dress. The Act of Uniformity of 1559 stated that vestments were to be worn by priests during religious services,

and outside the church, the surplice was to be worn. The Puritans opposed this since they regarded all vestments as having no scriptural basis and were simply a reminder of Rome. Elizabeth attempted to enforce the wearing of vestments through her Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker(1504-1575). He issued a code in March, 1565 called the Advertisements. This code enforced the wearing of clerical vestments especially the surplice. Elizabeth refused to directly support the Advertisement since it might make her unpopular. Parker attempted to enforce it himself, especially in London, a seat of strong non-conformity, through Bishop Edmund Grindal(1519-1583). Grindal's attempts were weak so Parker called the clergy of London to his home, Lambeth Palace, in order to obtain their submission to the Advertisement. Thirty-seven clergymen refused to honor the code and were suspended. This caused the Puritans to become more unified. This incident caused them to take a stance to make their desires known. The Puritans decided to petition Parliament to obtain recognition of their reforming views only to find that the Queen would not tolerate any discussion of religion in Parliament. This is significant because the Puritans were organizing themselves together as a viable political force, they also discovered the opposition that Elizabeth held against religious reform especially if it was attempted through Parliament (Knappen p. 87-90).

The Puritans accepted the fact that they were first of all

members of the Church of England, but it was an institution which they strongly believed needed a thorough reformation. They did not want, however, to separate themselves from the Church of England. Their aim was to work within the structure of the church and to create a church to their liking (McGrath p.33). The Puritans were growing tired of the mediocre comprises of Elizabeth I, such as the revision of the Book of Common Prayer. This to the Puritans was, "a thing culled from that popish dunghill the Breviary and the Mass book" (Erickson p.126). Many of the Elizabethan reforms were simply seen as half-way measures of reformation by the Puritans. The Puritans wanted a total reformation of the Church of England and they saw the possibility for this in a continental reformer John Calvin.

The Puritans were English Calvinists. John Calvin(1509-1564), was a French theologian who in 1536 in Geneva published a major theological treatise entitled, Institutes of Christian Religion. This work turned Calvin into an authoritative spokesmen for Protestantism. His Institutes became the single most influential manual produced during the reformation. He was expelled from Geneva in 1538 only to arrive back on the scene in 1541 to establish what became the religious reforming center of Europe. The ideas and insights of John Calvin spread throughout Europe creating an international phenomenon. Calvin had successfully turned Geneva into a religious city-state that was greatly admired by many

Protestants including the Elizabethan Puritans. However, the Calvinist model of Geneva was fine for the Genevan Calvinists, but England would not be a Genevan England but an English Geneva (Emerson p.56).

Calvin's insights and ideas were sought by many including those in England. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1533-1553, communicated often with Calvin. Cranmer always urged Calvin to come to England for some peace and quiet and for the opportunity to discuss his theological beliefs. Cranmer, for some reason, always felt that if they met they would find that they had many of the same religious insights. In Elizabeth's reign, Francis Russell(1486?-1555), Earl of Bedford, who came from the West country which was a bastion of Protestantism, communicated with John Calvin. Calvin held Russell in very high regard. Russell was extremely interested in reform theology. Here are two examples of John Calvin communicating with very important and influential people in England who were able to influence the course of the English Reformation (Collinson p.52).

The Calvinist notion of the church was that it was filled with grace, and it spread forth this grace into the world. This belief lent full support to the full involvement of the congregation by emphasizing the notion of the communion of saints. Calvin writes in his Institutes:

Hence the additional expression, the 'communion of saints', for this clause, though usually omitted by ancient writers, must not be overlooked, as it admirably expresses the quality of the church; just as if it had been said, that the

saints are united in the fellowship of Christ on this condition, that all the blessings which God bestows upon them are mutually communicable to each other (New p.49).

This notion held by Calvin concerning the communion of the saints lent full support to his notion that the church was indeed filled with grace. The saints, those of the past and the present, made the church holy by their indwelling in the church. This view fully intensified the view of the importance of the congregational aspects of Puritanism and their belief that the church was the chief means to diffuse grace into the world. The Puritans under Elizabeth I accepted and believed this. The Puritan's looked upon grace as an activity of God through which He sanctified the world. They saw a definite need for the church to survive as an institution for it was, "endowed with grace and salvation as the result of the redemption" (New p. 33).

The Puritans held that man and humanity were depraved. This was solely due to the course of nature. The Puritans felt that the church was a "storehouse" of grace. That for those who were truly converted the church would serve as a foundation of the redemptive grace of God through which they would receive a new nature. If it was not a new nature then at least a partial restoration of the depraved nature of man could occur. This partial restoration of the life of man still left him open to the temptations of the world but it helped to assure his own perserverance. Each congregation of Puritans was to be its own body of believers, its own brotherhood. The Puritans rejected

any notion of a universal church which was placed under the authority of one man such as the Roman Church (Holifield p. 45).

In Anglican theology the church is a body of believers and as such is not a "storehouse of grace", but is an organization of people of faith with Christ as its head. The church is a body united to Christ by the sacraments and its ministers. The Anglicans view man as a little less than an angel; certainly not as one who is totally depraved. Man is a being who loves God and works to love his neighbor as himself. God helps him to achieve this perfection no matter where man may be, in or out of a church (Marshall p.101).

The concept of church was important to the Puritans. They wanted a church along their lines without the ceremonies and rituals of the Church of England which they regarded as only half-way reformed. The Puritans attempted to establish a church to their liking but were unable to succeed as evidenced in the Parliaments of the 1570's. Many bills were introduced into Parliament to further Puritan demand for church reform. One attempt was made by Walter Strickland, a member of the House of Commons and a well-known family from the North. Strickland introduced a bill which would reform the Book of Common Prayer, abolish the use of clerical vestments, private baptisms, kneeling at communion and wedding rings. The Puritans regarded all these practices as superstitious (McGrath p.128).

The discussion of this bill went on for two readings but

was soon put aside by Sir James Croft, the Comptroller, who insisted that matters concerning religion be left to Elizabeth. This bill was never mentioned again. Finally, the Puritans after attempting to reform the Church through Parliament and failing, issued a publication entitled, Admonition to Parliament in June of 1572. This work consisted of two parts. Part one demands that the hierarchy be removed from the church and part two attacked all the vestiges of Roman Catholicism, such as vestments, which remained in the church. This work is important because it illustrates that the Puritans are organized enough to publish tracts against the government and that they are visibly opposed to Elizabeth's church policy. To demand that the church hierarchy be removed is jeopardizing Elizabeth's control of the church. She enacted her church policy through the hierarchy instead of herself as she did with Matthew Parker and the Vesterian Controversy. To be against her policy is to be against the Queen, and this could be considered treason (McGrath pp.143-145).

The Admonition to Parliament though, also symbolizes the various factions within the Puritan movement. The Puritans themselves were not one cohesive body who accepted one creed of belief. The attack against the hierarchy symbolized the growing movement of Presbyterianism, Separatism, and Congregationalism. The Presbyterians wanted each parish to choose its own minister and to elect their own group of elders. These elders would meet with other elders from other churches in the form of a synod to

decide various church matters. The Separatists advocated breaking away from the Church of England to accomplish this but they were repressed. Three leaders of the Separatists, Henry Barrow, John Greenwood, and John Penry were executed in 1593. The Congregationalists advocated that each parish be its own independent body of believers, there was no other power beyond the congregation. The Puritans were now no longer concerned with minor details of rituals but now advocated radical new structures of church organization that if implemented would place Elizabeth's position as Supreme Governor of the Church in danger. Elizabeth's policy was one of moderation in religious matters to appease all reforming factions, and these reforms, if enacted, would endanger her policy and possibly her reign as Queen. Elizabeth simply repressed these movements by allowing no discussion of religion in Parliament (Emerson p. 15).

As stated previously much of the theological thought of the Elizabethan Puritans stemmed out of the writings and teachings of Calvin. In Calvinism there is a major emphasis upon Covenant Theology, which is the belief of the existence of a covenant between God and man. Calvinism also looked upon the sacraments as the means by which the faithful entered into and sealed a covenant with God (Moller p.48).

A covenant is defined as a binding agreement. Throughout the Old and New Testaments are various covenants entered into by God and man. Calvin saw that throughout history, God and man, from Adam to Moses to Calvin's time, made covenants and

these emphasized the notion of salvation throughout history. Calvin saw that a covenant is above any law because man, the depraved creature that the Puritans believed him to be, could escape this law and freely enter into the covenant of grace (Moller p.49). Calvin in his Institutes which contain his main theological beliefs states:

In making the covenant, God stipulates for obedience on the part of his servant; the covenant was not simply between God and man. God gave the covenant, it's as if God said, 'See how kindly I indulge thee; for I of my authority, which I might justly do: but whereas I owe thee simply on account of my authority, which I might justly do: but whereas I owe thee nothing I shall engage in a mutual covenant.' (New p.36).

This covenant that Calvin believed God offered us, and which the Elizabethan Puritans also believed was a covenant of grace offered to all those who believed that everlasting life could be obtained through belief in Christ. Christ is the being who gives grace to all believers and so Jesus Christ is the foundation, the rock of the covenant. Calvin's Covenant Theology emphasized the sovereignty of God in his covenants made with mankind. Calvin showed how God continuously made covenants with man throughout history, and Calvin believed that a covenant of God was a covenant of grace (Moller p.50).

Anglicanism sees grace as meaning kindness. Grace is God's favor and kindness and it comes from Jesus Christ. Anglicanism sees God as giving grace to all people. According to Anglicanism, the benefit of grace serves to draw the faithful nearer to him (Marshall p.137).

Calvin defined a sacrament as, "a testimony of divine

grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety" (Holifield p.14). In Calvinism there were only two sacraments; baptism and Eucharist. Calvin saw the sacraments as confirming a Covenant, the promise God made upon man. The sacraments were merely a human effort to strengthen the notion that salvation would be achieved by all those who accept the promise of God through his son Jesus Christ. The sacraments illustrated to the congregation the saving promise of God (Holifield p.14). The Anglicans viewed the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist as the means by which to obtain grace. They did not feel that these sacraments served to seal grace upon the faithful. They saw these sacraments as the only true way to receive grace from God, and not by just belonging to a church would one automatically receive grace.

Dudley Fenner (d.1587), a systematic Puritan theologian, and a friend of Thomas Cartwright who was a founder of the English Presbyterian movement, wrote in his work The Whole Doctrine of the Sacraments, that:

Baptism was an instrument sealing God's Covenant promises, grafting the child to Christ and augmenting the process of Christian growth. In the Lord's supper the Christian received spiritually not only the benefits of Christ, but also Christ himself both as God and man through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Both sacraments strengthened and increased faith and assisted the Christian to mortify his sinful nature and to advance into new life (Holifield p.43).

The Anglicans saw baptism as the way by which one entered Christian life. Baptism is the way that one is made a Christian and not simply rededicated to God. Baptism is the way by which we allow ourselves to be ingrafted into Christ. The Anglicans

saw baptism as the way to be regenerated and not simply to be rededicated to God (Marshall p.139).

The Puritan ritual of baptism was to be a public ritual in front of the entire congregation. The Puritans would not tolerate private baptism. For the ceremony, the Puritans disliked the use of a surplice by the minister, the interrogation of the infant with questions dealing with their acceptance into the faith, the sign of the cross, and the use of holy water fonts. The Puritans shunned these practices because they were reminiscent of Roman Catholicism (Holifield p.46).

The main argument the Puritans had with the Church of England was not so much theological but seemed to be in the way of ritual and ceremony, along with the hierarchical structure of the church. The Puritans wanted to keep things simple and wanted no part of fancy ceremonies since they had no scriptural basis and reminded them of Roman Catholicism. The Puritans were always attempting church reform in Parliament even though, as mentioned before, Elizabeth wanted no discussion of religious matters in Parliament. The Puritans only became more agitated by the steps which Elizabeth took to control them. By 1585 a great deal of resentment had built up among the Puritans causing the appearances of the Martin Marprelate Tracts. These tracts were highly satirical in nature. They were supposedly published by Robert Waldegrave, a loyal Puritan printer in London. A few of the tracts bore titles such as, The Epistle to

the Terrible Priests, and Hay Any Worke for Cooper, which attacked Bishop Cooper of Winchester. These tracts appealed to the masses due to their use of humor but did little to further the cause of Puritanism. Many serious Puritan reformers were offended by these tracts and only saw them as defeating the cause of Puritanism. These tracts made the Puritans look silly by resorting to cheap humor to obtain serious goals. The Martin Marprelate Tracts did nothing more than to cause many people to question the Puritans credibility (Collinson p. 392).

The Elizabethan Puritans, partly due to their strong anti-Catholic feelings, denied the doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine held that the bread and wine did not merely symbolize the body and blood of Christ but that these elements did in fact become the actual body and blood of Christ. This doctrine was part of the anti-Catholic thought of the time and it simply served to reinforce Puritan hostility against Rome. William Perkins, a fellow at Christ's College at Cambridge which was a leading center of Puritan thought writes:

Although in a sacrament there must be a distinction between the sign and the things signified, yet (the Papists) make none, but overthrow all signification of the signs by their transubstantiation (New p.60).

John Calvin in his theology also rebuked the notion of transubstantiation. Calvin preferred a spiritual interpretation of the real presence in the sacrament. Calvin saw the Eucharist as chiefly reaffirming and authenticating the grace of God that had already been given. Calvin desired frequent communion since it served to reinforce the notion of God's grace and it imposed

discipline upon the community of the faithful (New p. 68).

The Anglicans also did not believe in transubstantiation. They felt that in the Eucharist the faithful are given the love and life of God and are made to participate in Christ. The Eucharist is a way to obtain grace and the notion of a real presence is false because our Lord does not use the elements of bread and wine to incorporate his grace into our lives (Marshall p. 143).

The Puritans saw that the sacraments were essential to their worship. What was even more important to the Puritans and what was one of their desires in reforming the Church was the existence of a preaching ministry. The Puritans felt that the sacraments could not be administered without the true preaching of the Word of God to go along with it (Holified p.35).

To the Puritan, preaching gave them life. The minister was to be the vehicle for the spread of God's Word; by pen or by mouth the minister was the bearer of the Word of God. What the Puritans chiefly desired was that the preaching minister preach forth the theological notions of which they themselves approved, such as a strict observance of the Sabbath. The Puritans also felt that preaching was essential to uphold the validity of the sacraments (New p.45).

An important supporter of the importance of a preaching ministry was Thomas Cartwright(d.1585). He believed that it was necessary to have a homily before every sacrament. He thought that the one who gives the homily must not be a mere reader of

an official homily, or an ecclesiastical functionary, but one who truly preached the Word of God inspired by God alone and not the state. The Puritans honestly felt that the most important function of the minister was to preach the Word of God to the people. Thomas Cartwright writes:

When as the life of the sacrament dependth on the preaching of the Word of God, there must of necessity the Word of God be, not read, but preached unto the people amongst whom the sacraments are administered (New p. 56).

The Anglicans really did not have a theology of preaching as the Puritans did. They felt it was important to preach but they did not feel that the sacrament was not valid if preaching did not occur (Marshall p. 145).

Elizabeth I regarded this Puritan belief as dangerous. Preaching was important to the Puritans and it had developed into a practice known as "prophesyings". It had started openly in the 1560's and was at its height between 1574-1576. "Prophesyings" consisted of groups of preachers who would expound on a given Bible passage in front of large crowds who would also participate by asking questions and giving their views of the matter at hand. These meetings served to further educate Puritan ministers, to serve as a show of Puritan strength to Elizabeth, and to hopefully encourage young men to consider ministry as a vocation (Collinson p. 175).

Elizabeth feared these "prophesyings" since they served to educate the people and open them to new ideas, particularly concerning religion. Elizabeth wanted the "prophesyings" stopped altogether. This is important because at that time

the rate of illiteracy was high and the best way to spread new ideas was to vocalize them. The Puritans were preaching reform which threatened the stability of the church which in turn could also threaten the stability of Elizabeth's government. Elizabeth attempted to suppress these "prophesyings" through her bishops, as she did with most religious matters, so as to avoid any bad press. By 1584 the "prophesyings" were totally suppressed by the new Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift (Knappen p. 130).

In the remaining years of Elizabeth's reign from Whitgift's appointment in 1583 till her death in 1603 there was really not a great deal heard of from the Puritans. Whitgift had issued in 1583 The Articles which were addressed to both the Papists and the Puritans and were designed to restrict their religious practices. All ministers were now required to acknowledge the Royal Supremacy, and also acknowledge that the Book of Common Prayer contained nothing contrary to the will of God. The Martin Marprelate Tracts had discredited the Puritans in the eyes of many people. The leaders of the Puritans were dying off and the new leadership was inexperienced -- the Puritan movement was dying off (Collinson p. 400).

The Puritans had encountered nothing but opposition from Elizabeth. All the Puritan hopes and desires for reform were never met. Elizabeth had succeeded in squashing the voice of the Puritans, a small but vocal minority. Whenever dissent arose over church regulations such as the wearing of the

surplice Elizabeth simply stepped in, through a secondary source such as Parker or Whitgift, to lay down the law: all clergy were to conform or lose their office. The Vesterian Controversy, the Admonition to Parliament, and even the Martin Marprelate Tracts all served to point out the discontent the Puritans had. These controversies did nothing to bring about real change for the Puritans. The Puritans, stemming out of the reforming tradition of Wycliffe and Tyndale, were a constant source of consternation to Elizabeth. Their different viewpoints on theology with the Anglicans did not cause the problems. It was Puritan dissatisfaction with the reforms of Elizabeth's religious settlement. Elizabeth refused to modify her religious settlement in any way. Elizabeth feared the Puritans because they threatened to rock England with a religious reformation that would make a majority of her subjects unhappy. To appease the Puritans, who were a minority of the population, might have cost Elizabeth her throne.

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