CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 28: 100 Most Important Events in Church History

1534 The Act of Supremacy

Breaking from Rome, the English Parliament declared King Henry VIII "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England."

The joke in church circles is that the Episcopal church is the only denomination that started because of a divorce. In fact, as part of an advertising campaign in the 1980s, the Episcopal church designed a poster featuring Henry VIII that stated: "The Episcopal Church welcomes divorced people." (The Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. is, of course, part of the global Anglican Communion, rooted in the Church of England.)

The English Reformation is far more complicated, however, involving not only the marital woes of much-married Henry, but also a turbulent theological and political situation in England.

Rumblings in England

When Luther posted his ***Ninety-Five Theses*** in 1517, they did not go unnoticed in England. In 1521, young King Henry wrote (probably with assistance) a book attacking Luther's view of the sacraments. The pope graciously replied by bestowing on Henry the title "Defender of the Faith," a title still used by British monarchs.

Like the rest of Europe, however, England was restless with its church situation. Many bishops were rich landowners, priests and monks were often scandalously immoral, and the religion of the common people was woven with superstition. Earnest leaders like John Colet of Oxford called for reform. At Cambridge, a group of scholars met to discuss Protestant ideas; they became known as "Little Germany" because of their affection for Luther's teachings. In addition to these theological rumblings, there was a growing feeling of nationalism, a higher devotion to England than to the Roman church. The stage was set for a break with Rome.

Rumblings in the King's Marriage

Henry VIII, a lustful, selfish ruler, justifiably feared for England's stability if he failed to produce a son to succeed him. (He had at least one illegitimate son, of little use for succession.) Yet his wife of many years, Catherine of Aragon, was in her early forties and had produced only one surviving child, daughter Mary.

Henry sought an annulment, claiming that since Catherine had been his brother's widow, she could not legally be his wife. (He based his claim on Leviticus 20:21.) The pope stalled, partly because Catherine was the aunt of the mighty Emperor Charles V, a party the pope did not want to offend.

Henry, who was already drawn to dark-haired Anne Boleyn, couldn't wait. ("I would you were in mine arms or I in yours, for I think it long since I kissed you," he wrote her.) Henry knew the anticlerical feeling in England made the time right for a break. He appointed Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury, and Cranmer declared the marriage invalid. Henry married Anne, already six months' pregnant by him, in 1533.

Rupture with Rome

Pope Clement VII then excommunicated Henry, which only fueled dissent. Parliament passed a series of acts restraining the clergy and increasing Henry's power over them. In 1534 came the Act of Supremacy, declaring Henry to be "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England." England now had a national church, with the king at the helm. The Archbishop of Canterbury held the highest clergy office in the realm.

But Henry was no Protestant. He just wanted a Catholic church without a pope. He had broken with Rome, but not with its theology or ritual. In 1539 he issued the ***Six Articles***, which insisted on continuing practices such as private confession, clerical celibacy, and private masses.

Yet in two ways, Henry departed significantly from Catholic practice. He closed the monasteries and confiscated their vast holdings of land and wealth. The proceeds went into the royal treasury to support campaigns against France, and the land was transferred to nobles in hopes of increasing their loyalty to the crown.

Henry also ordered that an English Bible be installed in all churches. Henry had no real interest in the English people's studying the Bible, but an English Bible was another way of promoting English nationalism, for the churches would no longer be dependent on a Roman Latin Bible.

Henry died in 1547, having successively acquired four more wives after Anne Boleyn's execution. His successor was the puny Edward VI, son of his union with the third wife, Jane Seymour. During Edward's brief reign, England began to be truly Protestant. But Henry died thinking himself a good Catholic; his will provided for masses to be said for the welfare of his soul.

Repercussions of Henry's Reign

The day of the church's political supremacy was over, as seen by the fact that Henry could call himself head of the church in England. A century earlier, a king so audacious might have been assassinated. But Henry wasn't, and for an obvious reason: the English felt more pride in being English than in being Catholic. Nationalism was to be a permanent feature on the landscape of Europe.

The Act of Supremacy broke England from Rome—decisively. Though England briefly returned to Catholicism under Henry's daughter Mary, England was, forever after, not Catholic. Henry's selfish acts paved the way for a church that sought the ***via media***, the "middle way" between adherence to the pope, and aggressive dissent.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 43: How We Got Our Bible, Canon to King James

What the English Bible Cost One Man

Tyndale's comfort to persecuted Bible readers

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William Tyndale studied at Oxford and Cambridge. He could speak seven languages and was proficient in Hebrew and Greek. He was a priest whose intellectual gifts and disciplined life could have taken him a long way in the church, had he not had one compulsion: to teach English men and women the good news of justification by faith.

Tyndale had discovered the freedom and joy of this doctrine when he read Erasmus's Greek edition of the New Testament. What better way to share this message with English men and women than to put an English copy of the New Testament into their hands? This was not a passing fancy but became Tyndale's life passion, aptly expressed by his mentor, Erasmus, in the preface to his Greek New Testament: "Christ desires his mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I would that [the Gospels and the epistles of Paul] were translated into all languages, of all Christian people, and that they might be read and known."

It would be a passion, though, for which Tyndale would pay dearly.

Fleeing Home

He began decently and in order: in 1523, he sought permission and funds from the bishop of London to translate the New Testament. The bishop's answer was no, a telling no. Further queries in England convinced Tyndale that the project would not be welcomed by authorities anywhere in his land. So he left England for the free cities of Europe—Hamburg, Wittenberg, Cologne, Worms, and Antwerp—some place where he could translate and publish an English Bible.

From the Lutheran city of Worms, in 1525, his New Testament emerged—the first translation from Greek into English. It was quickly smuggled into England, where it received a less-than-enthusiastic response from the authorities. King Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, and Sir Thomas More, among others, were furious. It was, said More, "not worthy to be called Christ's testament, but either Tyndale's own testament or the testament of his master Antichrist."

Copies of his translation were bought up and burned, and plans were hatched to silence the troublesome translator.

Betrayal

Tyndale soon moved to Antwerp, a city in which he was relatively free from both English agents and those of the Holy Roman (and Catholic) Empire. For nine years he managed, with the help of friends, to evade authorities as he revised his New Testament and began translating the Old.

He also gave himself methodically to good works because, as he said, "My part be not in Christ if mine heart be not to follow and live according as I teach." On Mondays he visited others who had fled England because of religious persecution. On Saturdays he walked the streets, seeking in Antwerp's nooks and crannies poor people he could minister to. On Sundays he would dine in a merchant's home, reading

Scripture before and after dinner. The rest of the week was devoted to writing tracts and books and translating the Bible.

We do not know who exactly planned and financed the plot that interrupted this routine—probably high-ranking English bishops. We do know it was carried out by Henry Phillips, a man who had been accused of robbing his father and of gambling himself into poverty.

Phillips managed to pick up Tyndale's trail in Antwerp and wormed his way into Tyndale's life. Thomas Poyntz, Tyndale's associate and close friend, distrusted Phillips but could not convince Tyndale to avoid him. Phillips became Tyndale's guest at meals. Soon he was one of the few privileged to look at Tyndale's books and papers.

In May 1535, Phillips found a way to lure Tyndale away from the safety of his quarters at the English House of Antwerp, a house set aside for traveling English merchants. While slipping through a narrow alley, Tyndale walked into the arms of a band of soldiers whom Phillips had posted. He was immediately taken to the Castle of Vilvorde, the great state prison of the Low Countries, and accused of heresy.

Trials for heresy in the Netherlands were in the hands of special commissioners of the Holy Roman Empire. Based on other cases, we can draw a fairly accurate picture of the course of events Tyndale would endure. The trial would be carried out completely in private; the prisoner would not appear in public until the commissioners were ready to announce a verdict. It would take months for the law to take its course—while Tyndale lay in the cells of Vilvorde, languishing in loneliness, cold, and poverty, cut off from news and from friends.

A Friend's Desperate Efforts

His arrest was in some sense a threat to the safety of all English merchants, who were supposedly safe from local authorities. So some merchants petitioned the Court of Brussels on Tyndale's behalf. In the end, the merchants couldn't deny that he was a heretic in the eyes of the law—and the laws against heresy had become ever more stringent.

Thomas Poyntz, Tyndale's close friend, was the most diligent in trying to secure Tyndale's release. He asked Lord Cromwell to apply political pressure upon the Low Countries. Tyndale, after all, was an English subject. But Cromwell was slow to move. His king, Henry VIII, was no friend of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. But he knew that King Henry had no love for Tyndale and would not grieve his death.

Letters from Cromwell eventually reached Flanders in September, asking for Tyndale's extradition as a diplomatic favor. But it was left to Poyntz to press the affair with the authorities, which he did, at the expense of his business and personal life. His heroic efforts paid off: he was told, at last, that Tyndale would be set free.

Afflictions in Prison

At this news, Tyndale's betrayer, Henry Phillips, seeing his plot beginning to unravel, went to the authorities and accused Poyntz of heresy. Poyntz was seized and placed in prison, where he remained for three months. In February 1536, he managed to escape, but he was forced to flee from Antwerp, leaving behind his business, his goods, and his wife. His life would never be the same. For Tyndale, Poyntz's exile was fatal: it essentially brought all effort on Tyndale's behalf to a standstill.

We know little of Tyndale's affairs in his lonely prison cell. According to John Foxe, a contemporary of Tyndale, "Such was the power of his doctrine and the sincerity of his life that … he converted his keeper, the keeper's daughter, and others of his household."

There is also one letter, written in Latin, in Tyndale's hand, that was found in Belgium last century. It bears no date nor name of place, but there can be little doubt that it was sent from his prison cell to the governor of the castle in the winter months of 1535. It tells us a great deal about the conditions in which he lived.

In contemporary translation, it reads, "I beg your lordship … by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here through the winter, you will request the commissary to have the kindness to send me, from the goods of mine which he has, a warmer cap; for I suffer greatly from cold in the head, and am afflicted by a perpetual catarrh, which is much increased in this cell; a warmer coat also, for this which I have is very thin; a piece of cloth, too, to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out; my shirts are also worn out. …

"And I ask to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. But most of all, I beg and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the commissary, that he will kindly permit me to have the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew dictionary, that I may pass the time in that study."

More than one historian has noted the likeness to Paul, who while languishing in prison asked Timothy for his cloak, his books, and his parchments (2 Tim. 4:13).

Trial and Death

Was Tyndale's request allowed? Did he continue work on his translation of the Old Testament? We do not know. Winter passed, and one more attempt was made to release Tyndale, but it was too late. Tyndale was already in the tedium of trial.

The trial was carried out in writing, and months were spent in a paper debate between Tyndale and the Roman Catholic inquisitors. The first step was to frame a formal accusation, to which Tyndale would reply. Then a series of papers were passed back and forth as Tyndale's doctrines were brought up one by one.

It was not until summer that the trial came to its climax. Then, early in August 1536, Tyndale was condemned as a heretic, degraded from the priesthood, and delivered to the secular authorities for punishment.

The rite of degradation took place separately from the punishment for heresy. A typical degradation was held in a church or town square, the local bishops sitting upon a high platform for all to see. Tyndale likely would have been led in, clad in the vestments of the priesthood, and made to kneel. His hands were scraped with a knife or piece of glass, as if scraping away the oil he had been anointed with; bread and wine were placed in his hands and taken away. Last, his vestments were stripped from him one by one, and he was clothed in lay garments. Then the presiding bishop handed him over to the secular officer for punishment.

Two months later, on the morning of Friday, October 6, it was the secular authorities' turn. We have but one brief description of Tyndale's execution. From descriptions of others like it, we can surmise that the execution took place in a public square, in the middle of which two great beams were set up in the form of a cross, standing about the height of a man. At the top, iron chains were fastened, and there were holes through which a rope of hemp was passed. Brushwood and logs lay at the base.

After local officials took their seats, Tyndale was brought to the cross and given a chance to recant. That refused, he was given a moment to pray. John Foxe says that he cried out, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!"

Then he was bound to the beam, and both an iron chain and a rope were put around his neck. Gunpowder was added to the brush and logs. At the signal of a local official, the executioner, standing behind Tyndale, quickly tightened the noose, strangling him. Then an official took up a lighted torch and handed it to the executioner, who set the wood ablaze.

One other brief report of that distant scene has come down to us. It is found in a letter from an English agent to Lord Cromwell two months later. "They speak much," he wrote, "of the patience sufferance of Master Tyndale at the time of his execution.

Two years after Tyndale died praying, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes," King Henry VIII required each parish church to have "one book [copy] of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English."

CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 43: How We Got Our Bible, Canon to King James

Reading a Banned Book

Tyndale's comfort to persecuted Bible readers

Let it not make thee despair, neither yet discourage thee, O reader, that it is forbidden thee in pain of life and goods, or that it is made breaking of the king's peace, or treason unto his highness, to read the Word of thy soul's health; … for if God be on our side, what matter maketh it who be against us, be they bishops, cardinals, popes …

Five Objections: Answered

1. They tell you that Scripture ought not to be in the mother tongue, but that is only because they fear the light, and desire to lead you blindfold and in captivity…

2. They say that Scripture needs a pure and quiet mind, and that laymen are too cumbered with worldly business to understand it. This weapon strikes themselves: for who is so tangled with worldly matters as the prelates?

3. They say that laymen would interpret it each after his own way. Why then do the curates not teach the people the right way? The Scripture would be a basis for such teaching and a test of it. At present their lives and their teaching are so contrary that the people do not believe them, even when they preach truth…

4. They say our tongue is too rude. It is not so. Greek and Hebrew go more easily into English than into Latin. Has not God made the English tongue as well as others? They suffer you to read in English of Robin Hood, Bevis of Hampton, Hercules, Troilus, and a thousand ribald or filthy tales. It is only the Scripture that is forbidden. It is therefore clearer than the sun that this forbiddal is not "for love of your souls, which they care for as the fox doth for the geese."

5. They say we need doctors to interpret Scripture [because] it is so hard… There are errors even in Origen and Augustine; how can we test them save by the Scripture?… We do not wish to abolish teaching and to make every man his own master, but if the curates will not teach the gospel, the layman must have the Scripture, and read it for himself, taking God for his teacher.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

A Tale of Two Martyrs

The burning of Reformers Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer

In the 1550s Bloody Mary tried to make England Roman Cathloc again and launched a deadly campaign against Protestant leaders. Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer, prominent bishops who held Reformation doctrines, died as martyrs on October 16, 1555. The following is John Foxe's account of how they died.

Dr. Ridley, entering the place [of execution] first, earnestly holding up both his hands, looked towards heaven; then shortly after, seeing Mr. Latimer, with a cheerful look, he ran to him and embraced him, saying, "Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame, or else strengthen us to abide it."

He then went to the stake, and, kneeling down, prayed with great fervor, while Mr. Latimer following, kneeled also, and prayed with like earnestness. After this, they arose and conversed together, and, while thus employed, Dr. Smith began his sermon to them.

Dr. Ridley, then, with Mr. Latimer, kneeled to my Lord Williams, the vice chancellor of Oxford, and the other commissioners, who sat upon a form, and said, "I beseech you, my lord, even for Christ's sake, that I may speak but two or three words."

And whilst my lord bent his head to the mayor and vice-chancellor, to know whether he might have leave to speak, the bailiffs and Dr. Marshal, the vice-chancellor, ran hastily unto him, and, with their hands stopping his mouth, said, "Mr. Ridley, if you will revoke your erroneous opinions, you shall not only have liberty so to do, but also your life."

"Not otherwise?" said Dr. Ridley.

"No," answered Dr. Marshal. "Therefore, if you will not do so, there is no remedy: you must suffer for your deserts."

"Well," said the martyr, "so long as the breath is in my body, I will never deny my Lord Christ and his known truth. God's will be done in me."

They were then commanded to prepare immediately for the stake. Then the smith took a chain of iron and placed it about both their waists; and as he was knocking in the staple, Dr. Ridley took the chain in his hand, and, looking aside to the smith, said, "Good fellow, knock it in hard, for the flesh will have its course."

They then brought a lighted faggot, and laid it at Dr. Ridley's feet, upon which Mr. Latimer said, "Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust never shall be put out."

When Dr. Ridley saw the fire flaming up towards him, he cried out, with an amazing loud voice, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit: Lord, receive my spirit!" and continued to repeat, "Lord, Lord, receive my spirit!"

Mr. Latimer cried as vehemently, "O Father of heaven, receive my soul!" after which he soon died, seemingly with little pain.

Owing to the bad arrangement of the fire [about Ridley], it burned all Ridley's lower parts before it

touched his upper and made him struggle under the faggots. Ridley, in his agony, often desired the spectators to let the fire come to him, saying, "I cannot burn." Yet in all his torment, he did not forget always to call upon God, "Lord, have mercy upon me!"

As soon as the fire touched the gunpowder [hung around his neck], he was seen to stir no more, but burned on the other side, falling down at Mr. Latimer's feet, his body being divided.

The dreadful sight filled almost every eye with tears, for some pitied their persons, who thought their souls had no need thereof.

—John Foxe, Acts and Monuments (1570)

(a condensed excerpt)

John Knox
Presbyterian with a sword

"The sword of justice is God's, and if princes and rulers fail to use it, others may."

He was a minister of the Christian gospel who advocated violent revolution. He was considered one of the most powerful preachers of his day, but only two of the hundreds of sermons he preached were ever published. He is a key figure in the formation of modern Scotland, yet there is only one monument erected to him in Scotland, and his grave lies beneath a parking lot.

John Knox was indeed a man of many paradoxes, a Hebrew Jeremiah set down on Scottish soil. In a relentless campaign of fiery oratory, he sought to destroy what he felt was idolatry and to purify Scotland's religion.

Taking up the cause

John Knox was born around 1514, at Haddington, a small town south of Edinburgh. Around 1529 he entered the University of St. Andrews and went on to study theology. He was ordained in 1536, but became a notary, then a tutor to the sons of local lairds (lower ranking Scottish nobility).

Dramatic events were unfolding in Scotland during Knox's youth. Many were angry with the Catholic church, which owned more than half the real estate and gathered an annual income of nearly 18 times that of the crown. Bishops and priests were often mere political appointments, and many never hid their immoral lives: the archbishop of St. Andrews, Cardinal Beaton, openly consorted with concubines and sired 10 children.

The constant sea traffic between Scotland and Europe allowed Lutheran literature to be smuggled into the country. Church authorities were alarmed by this "heresy" and tried to suppress it. Patrick Hamilton, an outspoken Protestant convert, was burned at the stake in 1528.

In the early 1540s, Knox came under the influence of converted reformers, and under the preaching of Thomas Guilliame, he joined them. Knox then became a bodyguard for the fiery Protestant preacher George Wishart, who was speaking throughout Scotland.

In 1546, however, Beaton had Wishart arrested, tried, strangled, and burned. In response, a party of 16 Protestant nobles stormed the castle, assassinated Beaton, and mutilated his body. The castle was immediately put to siege by a fleet of French ships (Catholic France was an ally to Scotland). Though Knox was not privy to the murder, he did approve of it, and during a break in the siege, he joined the besieged party in the castle.

During a Protestant service one Sunday, preacher John Rough spoke on the election of ministers, and publicly asked Knox to undertake the office of preacher. When the

congregation confirmed the call, Knox was shaken and reduced to tears. He declined at first, but eventually submitted to what he felt was a divine call.

It was a short-lived ministry. In 1547, after St. Andrews Castle had again been put under siege, it finally capitulated. Some of the occupants were imprisoned. Others, like Knox, were sent to the galleys as slaves.

Traveling preacher

Nineteen months passed before he and others were released. Knox spent the next five years in England, and his reputation for preaching quickly blossomed. But when Catholic Mary Tudor took the throne, Knox was forced to flee to France.

He made his way to Geneva, where he met John Calvin. The French reformer described Knox as a "brother … laboring energetically for the faith." Knox for his part, was so impressed with Calvin's Geneva, he called it, "the most perfect school of Christ that was ever on earth since the days of the apostles."

Knox traveled on to Frankfurt am Main, where he joined other Protestant refugees—and quickly became embroiled in controversy. The Protestants could not agree on an order of worship. Arguments became so heated that one group stormed out of a church one Sunday, refusing to worship in the same building as Knox.

Back in Scotland, Protestants were redoubling their efforts, and congregations were forming all over the country. A group that came to be called "The Lords of the Congregation" vowed to make Protestantism the religion of the land. In 1555, they invited Knox to return to Scotland to inspire the reforming task. Knox spent nine months preaching extensively and persuasively in Scotland before he was forced to return to Geneva.

Fiery blasts of the pen

Away from his homeland again, he published some of his most controversial tracts: In his Admonition to England he virulently attacked the leaders who allowed Catholicism back in England. In The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women he argued that a female ruler (like English Queen Mary Tudor) was "most odious in the presence of God" and that she was "a traitoress and rebel against God." In his Appellations to the Nobility and Commonality of Scotland, he extended to ordinary people the right—indeed the duty—to rebel against unjust rulers. As he told Queen Mary of Scotland later, "The sword of justice is God's, and if princes and rulers fail to use it, others may."

Knox returned to Scotland in 1559, and he again deployed his formidable preaching skills to increase Protestant militancy. Within days of his arrival, he preached a violent sermon at Perth against Catholic "idolatry," causing a riot. captionars were demolished, images smashed, and religious houses destroyed.

In June, Knox was elected the minister of the Edinburgh church, where he continued to exhort and inspire. In his sermons, Knox typically spent half an hour calmly exegeting a biblical passage. Then as he applied the text to the Scottish situation, he became "active and vigorous" and would violently pound the pulpit. Said one note taker, "he made me so to grew [quake] and tremble, that I could not hold pen to write."

The Lords of the Congregation militarily occupied more and more cities, so that finally, in the 1560 Treaty of Berwick, the English and French agreed to leave Scotland. (The English, now under Protestant Elizabeth I, had come to the aid of the Protestant Scots; the French were aiding the Catholic party). The future of Protestantism in Scotland was assured.

The Parliament ordered Knox and five colleagues to write a Confession of Faith, the First Book of Discipline, and The Book of Common Order—all of which cast the Protestant faith of Scotland in a distinctly Calvinist and Presbyterian mode.

Knox finished out his years as preacher of the Edinburgh church, helping shape the developing Protestantism in Scotland. During this time, he wrote his History of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland.

Though he remains a paradox to many, Knox was clearly a man of great courage: one man standing before Knox's open grave said, "Here lies a man who neither flattered nor feared any flesh." Knox's legacy is large: his spiritual progeny includes some 750,000 Presbyterians in Scotland, 3 million in the United States, and many millions more worldwide.

The following article is located at:
http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/denominationalfounders/knox.html

CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 28: 100 Most Important Events in Church History

1611 Publication of the King James Bible

A team of scholars produced an English Bible translation unsurpassed in linguistic beauty and longevity.

"To the most high and mighty Prince James by the Grace of God." So begins the dedication in the most popular English Bible of all time, the Authorized Version, widely known as the King James Version. The much-loved KJV, as it is often abbreviated, may have fallen out of favor in recent years as more readable translations have been published for twentieth-century readers. But generation after generation of readers has absorbed its phrases. We can safely say that no other translation will ever have such an effect on the English language.

King James

Who was the "mighty Prince James" whose name has been stamped on millions of Bibles? He was the son of Mary Queen of Scots, executed by her half-sister, England's Queen Elizabeth I. When the childless Elizabeth died, James, next male in the royal line, and already king in his native Scotland, marched south to London to be crowned king of England too. He is known to history as James I of England and James VI of Scotland.

Under Elizabeth, the Church of England had assumed an episcopal form of Protestantism. The growing number of Puritans felt Elizabeth had created a "compromise" church that wasn't Protestant enough. They wanted to "purify" the church of anything that resembled Catholicism, including bishops, clerical garb, and high ritual. Before James had even reached London, the Puritans presented him with the Millenary Petition (so called because it had a thousand signatures), asking for moderate changes in the Church of England.

But James liked the Church of England's episcopal structure and its title for the king, "Defender of the Faith." James was, in fact, rather pretentious and committed to the idea that kings ruled by divine decree. (His contemporaries called him "the wisest fool in Christendom" and snickered that he was hardly the person to insist on kings' divine rights.) James agreed to a conference, which met in January 1604 at Hampton Court. Here, however, James warned the Puritans that if they did not conform, he would "harry them out of the land." The conference was a failure for the Puritans, except on one point: James gave his approval to the making of a new translation of the Bible.

Translation or Revision?

James wanted something to replace the popular Geneva Bible. This 1560 version was much loved by the people (and probably the version Shakespeare read), yet it had a perceived Calvinistic slant, something James didn't like. The Puritans, meanwhile, disliked the Bishops' Bible, an authorized 1568 version read in churches but not widely accepted by the common folk. England needed one version that both churches and individuals, and both the Church of England and the Puritans, could read with benefit.

In 1607, James appointed nearly fifty scholars and divided them into six companies. For two years and nine months they worked individually and in conference, and then the whole text was gone over by a committee of twelve. While the scholars used the original Hebrew and Greek, they closely followed previous translations. In fact, it may be inappropriate to call the King James Version a translation. As the "Preface of the Translators" explains, it is more accurately a revision of earlier versions. For example, the work of William Tyndale, the first major English translator, is evident in many passages.

The KJV has been called the "Authorized Version," although, oddly, no proof has survived that James formally approved it. Officially, the new version was "appointed to be read in churches," replacing the Bishops' Bible. But it was a long time before it replaced the Geneva Bible as the Bible of the individual reader.

Bible English

Once established, however, the KJV was unshakable. Even though some critics said its language was archaic in the very year it appeared, later generations loved its "Bible English." As the language evolved, becoming less and less like the language of James's day, English-speaking Christians continued to express themselves in terms echoing the KJV. For example, many Christians still address God as "Thee" and "Thou."

And how the language has been affected! Even if the KJV were to someday go out of print—which is unlikely—our language still bulges with such immortal expressions as "the skin of my teeth," "Woe is me!" "a drop in the bucket," "my brother's keeper," "holier than thou," and many others.

But the effect goes beyond phrases. There is a cadence, a sentence rhythm, in the KJV that has never been matched in other English Bibles. If this beauty has detracted some readers from hearing the message, it has nevertheless been incredibly memorable and, therefore, memorizable. If learning Scripture is important, then committing it to memory is paramount, and we know that poetry—or poetic prose—is easier to memorize than flat prose. Today, almost four hundred years later, most people who can quote the Bible quote a version published in 1611.

Modern-day translators may rightly feel humble, knowing they can never produce a work that will so mold a language and shape an entire culture.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 89: Richard Baxter & the English Puritans

Physicians of the Soul

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

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

What kind of movement was Puritanism?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What false stereotypes do people have about the Puritans?

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

How were the Puritans innovative?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reformed *enough?*

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

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

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN HISTORY
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To Walk in All His Ways

REV. ROGER HAYDEN AND STAFF Roger Hayden, M.A., B.D., is a Baptist pastor in Reading, England and Secretary of the British Baptist Historical Society.

Baptism is accepted and practiced, and always has been, by just about every group in whatever place that has called itself Christian. Thus, it is somewhat ironic that a specific Christian group would emerge that would come to be identified as "Baptists." The issue of baptism—who should be baptized and by what method—would become important enough to them that they would endure persecution, social ostracization, even death, if necessary, to maintain their convictions.

Where did the Baptists come from? Why did their movement arise? The traceable historical roots of the Baptists as we know them today are to be found in the English church of the early 17th Century.

The chart entitled "Baptists Emerge..." cites some of the highlights of over 70 years of turmoil from the Act of Supremacy in 1534, and King Henry VIII's separation from Roman Catholicism, to the Hampton Court Conference in England in 1604 when the hopes of the Puritans within the church were thwarted by King James I.

During that tumultuous 70-year period, the English church was inescapably intertwined with the shifting affairs of the state and monarchy. Intense and often violent struggles ensued as the reform movement progressed. Fundamental questions related to the nature of the church, its doctrine, polity, practice and relationship to the state were tested and debated in the crucible of a rapidly changing society.

It was the English Baptists and the European Anabaptists that would put the church and its whole self understanding to the a more severe test than any other group as they embraced a collection of doctrines and principles that shattered the old world synthesis.

The Baptists originated among the Separatist movement. The Separatists themselves had come from the Puritans. The Puritans were loyal members of the established church and sought to advance the reform movement and "purify" the church from within.

The "Separatists" became impatient with the possibility of the established church ever being purified and called for a "separation" from the state church to form congregations that would pattern themselves after New Testament teaching and practice.

From the Separatists during the reign of James I would emerge the Pilgrim fathers who went to America, and the first Baptists. The two figures who can be identified as among the earliest Baptists are John Smyth (1570–1612) and Thomas Helwys (?–1616).

Smyth was an ordained Anglican priest who progressed through Puritan and Separatist stages. He studied at Christ's College, Cambridge from 1586 and among his tutors was a later Separatist leader in Holland, Francis Johnson. In 1594 he was ordained by the Bishop of Lincoln and was elected a Fellow at Christ's College.

He became the leader of a group at Gainsborough, on the borders of Nottinghamshire in the English Midlands. Gainsborough had become a gathering place for a number of ministers who had been in trouble with the authorities for their Puritan beliefs.

This Gainsborough group, according to William Bradford (who would later come to America on the Mayflower), formed a covenanted church and "as the Lord's free people joined themselves ... in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all his ways, made known or to be made known unto them (according to their best endeavors) whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."

Most Puritans had high hopes for change when James VI of Scotland came to the English throne in 1603. But following the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, Puritan hopes were thwarted by the approval of a new set of canons and disciplines for the government of the church. The Puritans had hoped to persuade the Anglican bishops to reform the church. However, James himself presided over the conference and threatened to "make the Puritans conform or else harry them out of the land." This strengthening of Anglicanism was felt at Gainsborough. After a year of meeting with great difficulty in 1607, the leadership decided that they should leave for Holland, as quickly as possible. The emigration took place in small parties, with Thomas Helwys playing a leading part in making arrangements for the momentous journey for Smyth's congregation.

Little is known about the early life of Thomas Helwys except that he hailed from Nottinghamshire on an estate which had been in the family for several generations. Helwys received a good education at Gray's Inn and after some years in London, he returned to his country home, Broxtowe Hall. From Puritan references it is known that Helwys' home was a haven for early dissenters and Helwys himself probably aided their cause financially. At some point Helwys was introduced to John Smyth and with Mrs. Helwys joined the Separatist congregation at Gainsborough prior to 1607.

The relationship between Helwys and Smyth was very deep. Helwys reflected: "Have we not neglected ourselves, our wives, our children and all we had and respected him? And we confess we had good cause to do so in respect of those most excellent gifts and graces of God that did abound in him." Even later, when Helwys and Smyth had parted, Helwys could write: "All our love was too little for him and not worthy of him."

The voyage to Holland took place in 1608. When they arrived in Amsterdam, a welcome haven for 17th Century prisoners of conscience, they were given hospitality by the Mennonites and housed in the great bakehouse of Jan Munter. Here they were free to worship according to the dictates of their conscience as guided by the New Testament and also free, as one historian observed, to experience "all the evils of overcrowding, from exacerbated tempers to the plague."

The congregation in exile energetically examined basic conceptions regarding the true nature of the church as set forth in the New Testament. Smyth came to the view that baptism should be administered only to believers. This led Smyth to baptize himself and then the rest of the group beginning with Helwys.

By this move, the group had removed themselves from the state church on the grounds that they had not been validly baptized as infants. It also marked a separation from their fellow Separatists. Indeed it would not be many years hence when William Bradford and his companions would decide in 1620 to emigrate to America where they would establish Plymouth Plantation on strict Separatist principles.

About February 1610 Smyth and about 31 others came to the conclusion that they had been in error baptizing themselves and sought fellowship with the Mennonites in Holland.

Thomas Helwys and about a dozen others disagreed, rejecting totally the idea of any necessary succession in the Church of Christ. It was "contrary to the liberty of the Gospel, which is free for all men

at all times and in all places: yea, so our Savior Christ doth testify—wheresoever, whosoever, and whensoever two or three are gathered in his name, there is he in the midst of them."

Helwys and his small band became convinced that they had been wrong to leave England. Though parting with Smyth caused him great personal pain, Helwys believed that the "days of great tribulation spoken of by Christ" had now arrived. He must get back to England and appeal to James I to stop persecuting the faithful.

The small group led by Helwys returned to England in late 1612 and established themselves at Spitalfields near London. Helwys wrote a moving appeal to King James in his own hand titled ***The Mistery of Iniquity*** in which he boldly called upon the monarch not to impose laws upon the consciences of his subjects. "The King," he said "is a mortal man, and not God, therefore he hath no power over the mortal souls of his subjects to make laws and ordinances for them and to set spiritual Lords over them."

For such fearless courage Helwys was thrown in prison, and had died in Newgate by 1616. Helwys gave to religious toleration the finest and fullest defense it had known till then. He believed that persecution of even the most serious spiritual error was itself iniquitous. He gave the magistrate fullest authority in civil affairs, but in the church the magistrate had no greater power than any other layman.

The Helwys congregation has been called the first General Baptist Church. These Baptists, who believed that no person was destined by a divine decree to damnation but that all people might repent and believe the Gospel, drew the inference that to destroy a person for mistaken beliefs might defeat the purpose of God. The small group grew in numbers and by 1626 the London congregation was associated with others at Lincoln, Coventry, Salisbury and Tiverton. It could not have been easy: for Calvinism was orthodoxy in England, Arminianism a heresy. Certainly they were distinct from those Calvinists who came to be known as Particular Baptists, a distinction which lasted in England until 1891.

When seven London Particular Baptist churches published a Confession in 1644, the second stream of Baptist life was clearly visible. Its source was in the family of congregations that had originated in the work of the Independent minister, Henry Jacob. Jacob had founded in 1616, near Southwark at London, a congregation based on the gathered church principle, and following his departure to Virginia, the original group evolved even further. Under John Spilsbury, one of the offshoots adopted believer's baptism while another branch differed as to who should administer baptism. By 1640 both of these churches concluded that immersion was the only mode of Scriptural baptism. Thus by 1644 when they issued the London Confession, seven congregations could be clearly identified as Baptists holding the particular or limited view of Christ's atonement.

The Calvinist Confession of the Particular Baptists had several distinctive emphases. Baptism was the 'door' into church fellowship and should only be administered to persons professing faith in Christ. The ministry was placed firmly in the immediate control of members of the covenanted Christian community. In political matters the 'king and parliament freely chosen by the kingdom' had legitimate powers, but there should be no state interference in church matters. The mutual cooperation of all churches was stressed, particularly as this related to church planting, financial assistance and resolution of controversial matters within a local church.

It was in 1649 that John Myles and Thomas Proud were dispatched by the London Baptists to spread the Gospel in Wales. Myles was the son of a prosperous farmer, educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, and he founded the first Particular Baptist Church in Wales at Ilston, near Swansea in 1650. Twelve years later he and a number of members emigrated to America, settling at a place they designated Swansea, even taking their church book with them.

During the Civil Wars and Interregnum (1630–1660) Baptists grew numerically, as many who served in the Parliamentary Army planted small churches as they moved from place to place. It was a generation in which many Baptists experienced the reality of political power. Parliament took power from the King; Parliament was replaced by the Army; and finally there was Cromwell's military dictatorship. But it must be said that in a time when the Anglican Church lost all its state power, Baptists were especially concerned with religious freedom.

After Cromwell died, the monarchy was restored to Charles II in 1660 by a Parliament which was strongly royalist and high church. King Charles had offered "liberty to tender conscience" declaring that none would be "called into question for differences in matters of religion which do not disturb the general peace of the kingdom." Parliament, when it met, comprising royalists who were Archbishop Laud's successors, had no such scruples. They were convinced that one church in one state was the only answer to the troubled society left by Cromwell. Church and state were wedded in such a way that loyalty to the crown was expressed by loyalty to the revived Anglican Church.

From 1660 to 1689 those who refused to conform to the 1662 ***Book of Common Prayer*** were increasingly persecuted by a number of laws, the so-called 'Clarendon Code' after Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and chief adviser to Charles II. Baptists, along with other nonconformists, experienced extreme harrassment, restraint of goods, and fines. This reached a climax when nonconformist supporters of the ill-fated uprising in support of the Duke of Monmouth in 1684 were dealt with by the infamous Judge Jeffries. In the West of England he sentenced 300 to be hung and deported nearly a thousand to Barbados.

During this period of persecution, the experiences of the Broadmead Baptist congregation in Bristol were recorded in the Church Book by one of their elders, Edward Terrill, who by his will left money to found what is the oldest Baptist College in the world (1679). One of the pastors, Thomas Hardcastle, wrote regular letters to be read to the congregation instead of sermons while he was imprisoned. Many of them are concerned with the meaning of faith in an age of persecution. Hardcastle believed persecutions were "a precious season of grace" whereby Christian hearts are purified and given deep and lasting joy. Faith is a shield for the Christian pilgrim as he overcomes the world on his journey. Another Baptist pastor also reflected on this theme in another prison. John Bunyan in Bedford jail produced the spiritual epic, Pilgrim's Progress, which would fuel the fires of faith for Christians in generations yet to come.

When James II fled the throne and the Protestant William of Orange became King, not only did active persecution cease, but those who dissented from the Church of England were given a recognized place in English society. The Act of Toleration, as it came to be known, allowed for toleration to trinitarian Protestants, whose ministers subscribed to all but three of the Thirty Nine Articles, so long as tithes and church rates were paid to the Established Church. Meeting houses could be licensed on condition that oaths of supremacy and allegiance to the Crown were taken. But all public offices in society were closed to any who would not take the Lord's Supper in the local Anglican church.

The situation for Dissenters after 1689 could be epitomized in the experiences of Bunyan's pilgrim. Vanity Fair was now passed, Christian was traveling "the delicate plain called Ease," toward the silver mine in the hill Lucre, and beyond that, "Doubting Castle." The 18th Century opened uncertainly for Dissenters who were concerned to build chapels and license places for worship. After the death of Queen Ann in 1714, Baptists and others felt more secure under the protection of the ruling House of Hanover. Baptists constituted at least 1% of English population, mainly living in towns. The Particulars numbered 40,520 in 206 chapels, and the Generals were 18,800 members in 122 chapels. Baptists were found mostly in the Midlands and the South, especially in London and Bristol.

The General Baptists went into a serious decline in the 18th Century. They became very inward in perspective, denying membership to any who married outside the General Baptist community, and

obsessed with such differences as the rightness of hymnsinging in their churches. They also lacked an educated and trained ministry, which left them open to anti-trinitarian views. Many General Baptist churches became unorthodox in their view of the person of Christ, and by the end of the century had become Unitarian.

The 18th Century opened for Particular Baptists with the threat of doctrinal deviation also. Particular Baptist Associations were reformed on the basis of the 1689 Confession of Faith, subscribed by over a hundred congregations at a meeting in London. In the west country, Bristol Baptist Academy, from 1720 onwards, produced a steady stream of able and evangelical ministers to serve the churches in England, Wales, Ireland and American Colonies. Bernard Foskett and his successors at the Academy kept alive an evangelical Calvinism when many Baptists were succumbing to the "high" Calvinism propounded by London Baptist minister, Dr. John Gill (1697–1771). His interpretation reduced the need for evangelical efforts since it assured the elect of salvation.

Apart from the theological differences between the more radical General Baptists and the Particular Baptists, who were closer to the mainstream of the Puritan movement, other issues divided early Baptists. Some were Seventh Day Baptists, worshipping on the Old Testament Sabbath or Saturday. More troublesome was the issue of mixed communion: should they practice 'strict' or 'closed' communion, confining membership to those baptized as believers, or have open membership for all believers, leaving the issue of baptism to the individual conscience? Most Particular Baptists practiced strict communion, but there were some important exceptions, like Henry Jessey's church in London, John Bunyan's at Bedford, and Broadmead, Bristol.

If the church was to be a community of believers, it demanded godly lives of its members. They had to set themselves apart from the world; they must themselves be beyond reproach. This discipline of church members who "walked unruly" was a matter of communal concern, and the records of church meetings show sad examples of those punished for immorality, drunkenness and debt.

Although Baptists stressed the independence of the local church, they were ready to work together for the common good. In 1644 seven London Particular Baptist churches issued a joint Confession of Faith, and in 1651 thirty General Baptist churches in the Midlands produced their first Confession. By the 1650's Particular Baptists were active in regional associations in several parts of England, South Wales and Ireland. After the Toleration Act of 1689 Particular Baptists from England and Wales began to hold an Assembly in London, although their involvement in the regional associations remained more important to them. General Baptists also grouped in district associations; from 1654 their General Assembly became important, with increasing authority over the member churches.

By the end of their first century, Baptists had developed a definite identity and yet a variety about themselves. Through good times and bad, one small congregation had evolved into three main streams and Baptists were recognized as part of official Nonconformity. Their churches stretched from London to Wales to Yorkshire—and to America. Their ranks had swelled with artisans, commonfolk, military officers, and men and women of property. Their preachers were well known for their gifts of elocution and some of their learned spokesmen were considered among the most widely read authors of the century. Truly the seed of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys had borne fruit in what Baptist historians would consider as the logical conclusion of the Reformation in England.

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Baptist Distinctives

Five key convictions that have been essential to Baptists from their beginnings

The Supreme Authority of the Bible

> The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.
>
> We acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church which are common to human actions and societies and which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

Thomas Helwys (1611)

Believer's Baptism

> Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispersed only upon persons professing faith. The way and manner of dispensing this Ordinance the Scripture holds to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water. Is is a sign as follows: first, the washing of the whole Soul in the blood of Christ; second, the interest that the Saints have in the death, burial and resurrection; third, a confirmation of our faith that as certainly as the body is buried under water and rises again, so certainly shall the bodies of the Saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of resurrection, to reign with Christ.

The London Confession (1644)

Local Church Autonomy

> Each particular church has a complete power and authority from Jesus Christ to administer all gospel ordinances, provided they have sufficient, duly qualified officers ...to receive in and cast out, and also to try and ordain their own officers, and to exercise every part of gospel discipline and church government, independent of any other church or assembly whatever. Several independent churches where Providence gives them a convenient situation, may and ought for their mutual strength, counsel, and other valuable advantages, by their voluntary and free consent, to enter into an agreement and confederation.

Benjamin Griffiths (1746)

Preaching and Evangelism

> The work of the Christian ministry, it has been said, is to preach the gospel, or to hold up the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as the only way of a sinner's salvation. This is doubtless true; and if this be not the leading theme of our ministrations, we had better be

anything than preachers. Woe unto us, if we preach not the gospel! It will not be denied that the apostles preached the gospel: yet they warned, admonished, and intreated sinners to re pent and believe; to believe while they had the light; to labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life; to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out; to come to the marriage-supper, for that all things were ready: in fine, to be reconciled unto God.

Andrew Fuller (1785)

Separation of Church and State

As religion must always be a matter between God and individuals, no man can be made a member of a truly religious society by force or without his own consent, neither can any corporation that is not a religious society have a just right to govern in religious affairs.

Isaac Backus (1781)

4 THE AGE OF REASON AND PIETY: THE CHURCH IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

PROGRAM SCRIPT

During the two centuries between the death of Martin Luther in 1546 and the conversion of John Wesley in 1738, the Christian world experienced a major paradigm shift from the Age of Faith to the Age of Reason. The tension between these two, faith and reason, was always there, like an underground stream running just beneath the surface, sometimes unseen, at other times erupting like a geyser into full view. It is a conflict embedded within the very bedrock of Christianity itself.

Jesus said that we were to love God with all our mind. (Matthew 22:37: "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" NIV) Yet Saint Paul warned against an over reliance on philosophy and vain speculation. Tertullian's famous question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the church to do with the academy?" echoes down the centuries.

In the early church, Augustine struggled to integrate his Christian faith into the world view of neoplatonism. In the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas tried to harmonize the competing claims of nature and grace. It was not an easy task. Three years after his death, many of his ideas were condemned by the Bishop of Paris, indicating that, at least in the minds of some, Thomas had not perfectly succeeded in this quest. In the sixteenth century, the Reformation asserted the priority of revelation over reason, but neither Luther nor Calvin were prepared to abandon the life of the mind. Only when human reasoning was elevated above faith was it seen as an enemy of God, a beast or, as Luther called it, "The Devil's Whore."

THE MAJOR PARADIGM SHIFT

The period immediately after the Reformation was a time of great triumph in many ways. The ideas of Luther and Calvin were expressed in classic statements of faith: "What is the chief end of man?" asks the Westminster Shorter Catechism. "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

This was the age of Johann Sebastian Bach, who inscribed on every piece of music he wrote the words: *Soli Deo Gloria!*, "To God alone be the glory!" This was also the age of John Bunyan and John Milton, of artists Rubens and Rembrandt, and the amazing art and architecture of the Baroque period, all majestic witnesses to the coherence and power of the Christian vision.

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THE AGE OF REASON AND PIETY: THE CHURCH IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

But just beneath the surface, enormous changes were taking place in the way human beings conceived the world and their own place within it. In 1543, three years before Luther's death, the Polish astronomer Nicolas Copernicus' book, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies,* turned on its head the cosmology of the ancient world that had held sway for over one thousand years. "The Earth is not the center of the universe," Copernicus said, "but merely one of several planets revolving around the sun." To this day we have yet to grasp the full significance of the Copernican Revolution, for we still speak anachronistically of "the sun rising and setting."

Equally important was the work of René Descartes, a French philosopher who introduced a new method of knowledge based on the principle of radical doubt. Archbishop William Temple once said that the most disastrous moment in European history was perhaps the bitterly cold day in the winter of 1620, when Descartes climbed into the alcove of a stove and resolved to search for a new kind of philosophy. Out of this effort came his famous principle *cogito, ergo sum,* "I think, therefore I am." Or as he also expressed it, "I doubt, therefore I am." Descartes himself remained a nominal Catholic. The result of his philosophy was to split apart reality into mind and matter and to reduce God to the level of a hypothesis called in, as it were, merely to guarantee the validity of human thinking.

Building on the work of Copernicus and Descartes, Sir Isaac Newton finally drew up, in complete mathematical form, a mechanical view of nature. Newton was a devout Christian who accepted the claim of the Bible. He even wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation. But later philosophers found it easier to accept his mathematics than his theology, thus deepening the rift between faith and reason.

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT BORN

In such an atmosphere, the "Age of Enlightenment" was born. What is "The Enlightenment"? It was a tendency, a spirit which permeated the culture and religion of the 17th and 18th centuries, characterized by two primary thoughts:

- The first we might call "The Rise of the Imperial Self." The great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, summarized the Enlightenment in two Latin words: *supere aude!* — "dare to think for yourself! "To think for one's self meant to seek the supreme touchstone of truth in one's own reason.

- And this implied the second principle of the Enlightenment: a radical suspicion and distrust of authority and tradition, especially Christian authority and tradition.

The Enlightenment attack on Christianity took two forms. One was biting sarcasm and ridicule. "Ecrasez l'infâme!" shouted Voltaire, "Destroy the infamous thing!"— meaning historic Christianity. To be sure, there was much about the church which deserved criticism: for more than one hundred years Europe had been ravaged by fierce wars of religion, Catholics fighting Protestants; and there was immorality and corruption in the church itself. But Voltaire was less interested in reform than in refutation. He denounced Christian doctrine and belief. He scoffed at the miracles in the Bible and made fun of traditional Christian teaching: "If Jesus had been taken up to a hill where he could see all the kingdoms of the earth," he asked, "why hadn't he discovered America instead of Columbus? And why had Jesus not returned to earth as He had promised to establish the kingdom of God with power and great glory? What had detained him? Was the fog too thick perhaps?"

What Voltaire tried to do with a sneer, the English deists wanted to accomplish through a religion of reason and refinement. The titles of their writings say it all: *Christianity Not Mysterious, Christianity as Old as the Creation*. No special revelation, no miraculous Incarnation was necessary.

In America, Thomas Jefferson, who was greatly influenced by the deists, published a special edition of the New Testament in which he literally cut out all of the verses which were offensive to his reason: No demons, no judgment, no hell, no miraculous interventions from above.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT

What was the Christian response to The Enlightenment? Some Christians tried to answer the deists and the skeptics on their own terms. The philosopher John Locke, wrote a book entitled *The Reasonableness of Christianity.* Bishop Joseph Butler published his *Analogy of Religion,* claiming that the intricate design of the universe implied a Designer, that is, God. While this kind of apologetics had a place in Christian thinking, it did little to bring genuine renewal and revival to the church.

For this we must look elsewhere: to France, for the lonely witness of Blaise Pascal; to Germany, where the Pietists stressed the importance of the new birth; and finally, to England, where John Wesley and the Methodist revival made a lasting impact on the church in the modern world.

Pascal was a brilliant philosopher, mathematician, and inventor. He was the first man to wear a wristwatch. He also invented one of the earliest forms of the computer as well as the first underground public transportation system for the city of Paris. Pascal had a profound sense of the ambiguity of human existence:

> What a novelty, what a portent, what a chaos, what a mass of contradictions, what a prodigy is man! Judge of all things. A ridiculous earthworm who is none the less the repository of truth. A

> sink of uncertainty and error. The glory and scum of the world. A chaos suspended over an abyss.

Pascal was a Roman Catholic, of course. He defended the Jansenists, a radical Augustinian order opposed by the Jesuits. He agreed with the Jansenist emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the surprise of grace in the Christian life. Pascal was no irrationalist, but he realized the limitations of human thinking. "The heart has its reasons which are unknown to reason," he said. When Pascal died at the age of 39, a statement of his own personal conversion was found on his body, sewn into the fabric of his shirt. It said this:

> The year of grace, 1654: Monday, November 23, day of St. Clement, pope and martyr, and others in the martyrology. Vigil of St. Chrysogonus, martyr, and others from about half past ten in the evening to about half past midnight. Fire. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosopher and the scientists, certitude, certitude. Emotion. Joy. Peace. God of Jesus Christ.

Pascal's writings were not widely known outside of France in his own lifetime, but many of his ideas were echoed among the Pietists in Germany. Pietism arose as a protest movement within the tradition of Lutheran Orthodoxy. The Pietists stressed the religious renewal of the individual and experiential oneness with God over against arid scholasticism in theology and extreme formalism in worship.

John Wesley summarized the spirit of Pietism as well as anyone when he said,

> How plain and simple is this? Is not this the sum? One thing I know: I was blind, but now I see. If then it were possible (which I can see that it is not) to shake the traditional evidence of Christianity, still he that has the internal evidence would stand firm and unshaken.

Pietism was about "the internal evidence," and this led them to stress three things:

- The importance of the new birth, which implied a life of holiness and complete devotion to Christ. "We are called to be *ein ganzer Christ* (as they said in German), "a whole, complete Christian. We cannot be 'almost' Christians. 'Almost' a son is a bastard; 'almost' sweet is unsavory; 'almost' hot is lukewarm (which God speweth out of his mouth). So 'almost' a Christian is not a Christian."

- But for all of their stress on individual renewal, the Pietists were not like the early monks who lived alone in the desert. The context of personal renewal was the small group, the prayer circle, the Bible study fellowship. Within such small groups a much higher level of commitment could be demanded than was possible within the larger congregation. Not surprisingly, these smaller groups became "little churches within the church," sometimes leading to division and separation, but sometimes working as a reforming leaven within the larger group.

- A third mark of Pietist spirituality was a sense of opposition to the world. *Gotteskinder* are not in league with *Weltkinder.* God's children march to a different drummer than the children of the world. To some Pietists, separation from the world meant a distinctive form of dress and food as well as foreswearing such worldly activities as dancing, drinking, the theater, etc. In the quest for authentic Christianity, legalism is always a possibility, but the Pietist reaction can also represent a healthy impulse against a Christianity that has become too accommodated to the culture around it. This tradition lives on today among the Amish and other holiness movements who have willingly separated from the world to maintain the purity of worship and a distinctively Christian lifestyle.

But in its larger expressions, the Pietist movement was both world-affirming and missionary-minded. It was the Pietists who pioneered works of charity among the poor: orphanages, medical missions, and Bible societies. It was also the Pietists (especially the Moravians, who carried the Gospel into the remote corners of the world), who paved the way for the modern missionary movement.

The founder of the Moravian Church was Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a Lutheran nobleman from Saxony. While touring Europe in 1719, Zinzendorf saw a famous painting of Christ wearing the crown of thorns, with the inscription: "All this I did for you. What are you doing for me?" Zinzendorf gathered around him a group of Moravian refugees who dedicated themselves to carrying the Gospel into all the world. The Moravians had a great devotion to Jesus, and many of Zinzendorf's hymns are still sung by Christians today. And the Methodist revival was born in a Moravian prayer meeting on Aldersgate Street in London, where John Wesley had gone seeking salvation and hope.

THE METHODIST REVIVAL: JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY

John Benjamin Wesley was born in 1703, one of 19 children born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley. His father was a pastor, and Wesley grew up with the disciplines of the Christian life. When he was only six years old, the parsonage

caught on fire. Young John nearly perished, being rescued at the last minute. His mother, Susanna, said that he was, "a brand plucked from the burning." Wesley never forgot this event. Every year, on the anniversary of his rescue, he stopped to thank God for his remarkable providence.

When he and his brother, Charles Wesley, were students at Oxford, they met another young man, the son of an innkeeper, named George Whitefield. All three would later emerge as leaders in the Evangelical Revival. At Oxford, they formed a small Pietist group, which other students nicknamed "The Holy Club." They would pray together, read the scriptures together, visit the sick and those in prison. They also read other devotional works such as Jeremy Taylor's *Rules for Holy Living and Dying*, William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, and Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. Charles Wesley later said of these books: "These convinced me more than ever of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian. I determined by God's grace to be all devoted to my Lord, to give Him all my soul, my body, and my substance."

Moved by this kind of commitment, both Wesley brothers volunteered for a stint of missionary service in the new colony of Georgia, where General James Oglethorpe needed chaplains to serve among his settlers, many of whom were recently released prisoners and other "ne'er do wells."

John Wesley was a notable failure as a minister in Georgia. He fell passionately in love with a young lady named Sophie Hopkey but decided, by casting lots, that he should not marry her. Miss Sophie felt betrayed and misled by Mr. Wesley. Before long, Wesley found himself imprisoned in Savannah, charged with slandering the good name of this young lady.

Somehow he managed to escape by the skin of his teeth and soon found himself on a ship headed back to England. When the ship was caught in a storm at sea, Wesley was deeply impressed by a band of Moravians who faced the danger with great peace and poise. He doubted his own salvation. He wrote in his journal,

> I went to America to convert the Indians, but, oh, who shall convert me? Who, what, is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief: I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well, nay and believe myself, while no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, "to die is gain."

Back in London, he met a group of Moravians, led by Peter Böhler, who invited him to a service of worship held in a little meeting house on Aldersgate Street (not far from St. Paul's Cathedral). On the evening of May 24, 1738, Wesley went very unwillingly, he said, to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans.

"About a quarter before nine," John says,"while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart

strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Someone has said that "what happened in that little room was of more importance to England than all of the victories of Pitt by land or by sea." But what did happen in that little room? No doubt, Wesley's Aldersgate experience is one of the most famous conversions in the history of Christianity.

But what was he converted from? He was 34 years old when this happened. He had been brought up in a godly home, educated in the finest schools, ordained as both a deacon and priest in the Church of England. He had been a tutor at Lincoln College, Oxford, and had even served several years on the foreign mission field. Apart from a few wild oats in Georgia perhaps, there is no evidence that Wesley was anything other than a religious man of discipline, devotion, earnest service, and good works. But all of that had left him totally miserable, with no assurance of salvation.

And what was he converted by? There were none of the trappings of modern revivalism — no sawdust trail, no one sang "Just As I Am" or "The Old Rugged Cross." Someone was merely reading a commentary of Luther on a letter of Paul, who was explaining the meaning of the forgiveness that Jesus had brought. But in that moment, Wesley discovered for himself what Jesus had declared, what Paul had known, and what Luther had proclaimed, namely, that no one can find peace of heart by trying to make himself a worthwhile person in the eyes of God. Wesley later said that before Aldersgate, "he had had the faith of a servant. Now he had the faith of a son."

And finally, what was Wesley converted to? Well, in one sense, he was converted to the same kind of work he had been doing all along before Aldersgate. He remained a priest in the Church of England and continued to receive the sacrament of communion once every five days for the rest of his life. He still continued to visit the poor, the sick, the imprisoned. He continued to study and preach from the scriptures. But he was doing all of this now, not as a means to earn favor with God, but in glad and joyful obedience to God's amazing grace in his life.

Wesley was a brilliant organizer and a great popularizer of the evangelical faith among the common people of England. His friend, George Whitefield, persuaded Wesley to start preaching out-of-doors, and soon he was addressing huge throngs of coal miners and factory workers. The poor and the outcast responded gladly to his message.

Wesley had remarkable stamina. During the last 50 years of his life, he travelled 225,000 miles and preached more than 40,000 sermons, (an average of 15 per week). He once remarked that he first began to feel old at 85!

Wesley declared that he had only one point of view: "To promote, so far as I am able, vital, practical religion, and by the grace of God, beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the soul of men."

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THE AGE OF REASON AND PIETY: THE CHURCH IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

METHODISM: A MOVEMENT ON FIRE!

Methodism was a movement on fire, with John's theology set to music by his brother, Charles, who produced over 7,000 sacred songs and poems. Hymn singing made an enormous contribution to the evangelical revival. The hymns of Charles Wesley were especially powerful, expressing both the joy of the new birth and the doctrinal truths of scripture.

"The world is my parish," Wesley had declared. His movement soon spread beyond England to America and, indeed, throughout the world.

His theology can be summarized in three phrases:

- Faith alone
- Working by love
- Leading to holiness

Wesley brought together the personal and social sides of Christianity. "To turn Christianity into a solitary religion is to destroy it," Wesley said. He proved his contention through his work on behalf of the poor, the enslaved, the imprisoned, the unlearned, and the addicted.

In an age when many Christian leaders were defending the lucrative slave trade, Wesley spoke out against it. On February 24, 1741, Wesley wrote the following letter to William Wilberforce, encouraging him to persevere in the struggle against slavery:

> Dear Sir,
>
> Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O, be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

But his concern for the practical application of the Gospel was never divorced from the primary message of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ. In an age when Christianity seemed to be overwhelmed by the rising tide of rationalism and unbelief, the "Evangelical Awakening" ignited new fire in God's people, inspiring them once again to be a vital force in the life of the world. The spirit of that original Wesleyan movement still rings in the words of this Charles Wesley hymn on God's sufficient, sovereign, saving grace:

> Father, whose everlasting love thy only Son for sinners gave,
> Whose grace to all did freely move
> And sent Him down a world to save,
> Oh, all ye ends of earth behold the bleeding, all-atoning lamb!
> Look unto Him for sinners sold,
> Look and be saved through Jesus' name.

Christianity and Science
By David Feddes

The Galileo trial and the “Scopes monkey trial” are two of the most famous courtroom dramas in history. In both cases, religious ignorance attacked scientific enlightenment. In both cases, a courageous hero taught new discoveries that the religious establishment didn't want to hear: Galileo, that the earth goes around the sun; Scopes, that people evolved from apes. Both Galileo and Scopes were persecuted, tried, and convicted. In the end, though, the courageous men of science were proven correct and the religious bigots were discredited. At any rate, that's how the story is often told, and it's portrayed as typical of a constant conflict between science and Christianity.

But maybe it's not that simple. Before we assume that faith in Christ hinders science, we first need face the fact that science flourished most in nations with a Christian heritage. Why is that? Is there something about faith in Christ that doesn’t hinder science but helps it? What if the common picture of the Galileo and Scopes trials is misleading? What if Jesus Christ is not the enemy of science but the scientist's friend?

The truth about Galileo's trial is that it was more a clash of philosophies and personalities than a battle of Scripture against science. The root of Galileo's trouble was not that he disagreed with the Bible. Galileo’s problem was that he disagreed with the ancient Greek thinker Aristotle. Most of Galileo's fellow scientists accepted Aristotle's overall approach to things, including Aristotle's view that the earth was the center of the universe. In fact, Galileo had more enemies among his fellow scientists than among the clergy. These scientists didn't want some upstart (especially someone as ornery as Galileo) saying Aristotle was wrong. They couldn't prove Galileo wrong using science, so they quoted a few Bible passages (which they misinterpreted to fit Aristotle) and called on Roman Catholic church authorities to get involved. Galileo was pressured to recant his views, though he never had to endure any physical suffering or jail time.

Does the persecution of Galileo show that Christianity is an enemy of science? No, it shows that Christians and church officials can sometimes be very wrong, but it doesn’t at all show that faith in Jesus hinders scientific discovery. Galileo counted himself a Christian and remained a church member his entire life. Galileo never saw himself in conflict with Scripture. He declared, "The Holy Bible can never speak untruth—whenever its true meaning is understood." So before you see Galileo as proof that science and Christianity are at odds, take note of the fact that Galileo himself endorsed Scripture, and take note of the fact that Galileo and other pioneers of science appeared not just anywhere in the world but in places with a Christian heritage.

Pioneers of Science

The person who originally came up with a mathematical model for the earth orbiting the sun was Nicholas Copernicus. He, like Galileo after him, was a church member. Indeed, Copernicus served his parish in an administrative position for forty years. Copernicus said, "The universe has been wrought for us by a supremely good and orderly Creator." Copernicus pursued science out of what he called a "loving duty to seek the truth in all things, in so far as God has granted that to human reason."

Johannes Kepler embraced the sun-centered view of Copernicus and improved it by showing that the planets orbit in an ellipse, not a perfect circle. Did Christianity hinder Kepler? No, he declared, "The chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order and harmony which has been imposed on it by God." He said that his scientific studies aimed only to think God's thoughts after him. Kepler believed God had called him to the work of science, and he prayed, "I give you thanks, Creator and God, that you have give me this joy in your creation, and I rejoice in the work of your hands." When asked on his deathbed where he put his hope for eternity, Kepler replied, "Only and alone on the work of our redeemer Jesus Christ."

After Copernicus and Kepler came Galileo. As we've seen, Galileo affirmed that the Bible, properly understood, is never wrong. Although he ran into trouble with certain church leaders, Galileo's background in Christianity and his belief in the Bible certainly didn't hinder him from making scientific advances.

Next on the list is Isaac Newton. Newton's belief in the Creator made him confident that there must be some underlying order to everything. Newton developed the concept of gravity, came up with equations for it, invented calculus, and achieved other scientific breakthroughs, all the while seeing it as evidence of God's power and wisdom. Newton wasn't just a scientist. He also wrote more than a million words on biblical studies and said, "No sciences are better attested than the religion of the Bible." Newton made theological mistakes, but there's no doubt he took the Bible seriously and believed in the physical resurrection of Jesus. “Atheism is so senseless,” he said. The universe “did not happen by chance.”

Consider a few more of the great trailblazers of science. Robert Boyle was the genius whose equation for gas pressure is what chemistry students still today learn as Boyle's law. Boyle was a devout Christian.

William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood. He saw this as one more proof that living things are designed by God. Harvey spoke of God as "the Divine Architect" who created everything "for a certain purpose, and to some good end," and Harvey opposed those in his day who said living things are merely the product of material forces acting by chance.

Georges Cuvier was a pioneer of comparative anatomy and a fossil expert who established paleontology, the study of fossils, as a field of its own. Cuvier was a Calvinist Christian. He insisted that nature has an orderly structure not because it's that way on its own but because it is subject to God's laws.

Physicist Lord Kelvin was a pioneer in the field of thermodynamics and established the Kelvin scale, which measures temperatures from absolute zero. Kelvin said, “If you think strongly enough, you will be forced by science to believe in God.

George Washington Carver, a brilliant black American, developed over three hundred different products from peanuts and over one hundred products based on sweet potatoes. Carver was born of slave parents, yet he went on to accomplish amazing things as a scientist and inventor. Carver was a Bible-believing follower of Jesus and credited his ability and success to God.

Louis Pasteur saved countless lives by discovering bacteria and its role in spoiling food and causing disease. Pasteur developed the bacteria-destroying method of pasteurization, which is name after him. He disproved the old idea of spontaneous generation, which said that life could emerge from non-living material, and established

the concept of biogenesis, that life comes only from other life. Pasteur believed strongly in God as Creator and in Christ as Savior, and he said that the more science he knew, the stronger his faith became.

Joseph Lister developed antiseptics to prevent germs from infecting wounds. He taught doctors to wash their hands and to sterilize surgical instruments before working on patients. Lister was a committed Christian.

The list could go on and on, but I trust it's clear that Christians have made enormous contributions to science. Their faith was an aid to their research, not an obstacle. They saw the Lord revealed in the Bible to be the scientist's friend.

A Friendly Framework

It's all too common to overemphasize conflict between faith and science, but we'd be wiser to ask why belief in the biblical God has proven to be so helpful to scientific discovery. The Bible says of the Lord Jesus, "All things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:16-17). Faith in a personal, rational Creator, along with confidence that reality is a unity held together by one Lord—this is the only solid foundation for rational investigation of the world.

It's a fact of history that the greatest flourishing of scientific discovery occurred in a civilization deeply influenced by the Christian worldview. Why is that? Is it just a coincidence? Or are there things in the Bible that somehow support and encourage scientific investigation? The Bible sets a strong precedent for studying the world around us and reveals principles which provide a friendly framework for such study.

The first biblical precedent appears at the very beginning. After God created animals and man, says the Bible, he gave man authority over other creatures. Then the Lord brought the animals to Adam to see what he would name them (Genesis 2:19). That's the work of science in a nutshell: exercising authority over other parts of creation, studying various things God has made, and coming up with the best words to describe them.

Another biblical precedent for scientific study is King Solomon, a man of unsurpassed genius. Solomon applied much of his brilliance to government, political strategy, and architecture. He also wrote poetry and music. As if all that weren't enough, Solomon made time for scientific study of nature as well. The Bible says, "God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight ... He described plant life [and] also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish" (1 Kings 4:29,33). The Bible speaks approvingly of Solomon's biological research, so it clearly considers science a good thing.

The Bible provides a precedent, and even more important, it establishes a worldview. All things are created by God through his Son, Jesus Christ, and designed according to his master intelligence and held together in a unity by his power and plan. This provides a basis for expecting to find rational patterns in the world around us and establishes a basic framework for scientific research.

That's not true of every worldview. Some worldviews have held that everything physical is evil or unreal. Why would you bother studying physical things if they're just an illusion anyway? Others have seen nature as divine and have worshiped animals and trees and the sun, moon, and stars. How can you experiment on something you

worship? How can you try to master other things if they contain the spirits of your ancestors or of various gods? Animist and pantheist worldviews don't encourage science. Others have viewed all things as part of inevitable fate. You can't change fate—you can only resign yourself to it—so what's the use of trying to understand or change anything in the world around you? Others have thought that chance or chaos is the ruling principle and that all things happen randomly. Why look for any uniform patterns in the world if all is chance and chaos? It's not surprising that worldviews like these have not produced many pioneers in the advance of science.

But the biblical worldview is different. According to the Bible, the physical world isn't evil but good; God created it and pronounced it good (Genesis 1:31), so it's very much worth investigating and developing. At the same time, the creation isn't itself God; it's created by God for his glory and our benefit, so it's good to study God's handiwork and make the most of it for human wellbeing. The world isn't just a matter of fate that we can only endure but not change; the Creator has empowered people to subdue creation and authorized us to rule over it (Genesis 1:28), so that's what we should try to do. Also, the world isn't mere chaos; it's designed by a wise Creator who is consistent in character and orderly in his creative activity, so it makes sense to look for patterns and structure.

The Bible shows that the God who made the universe also created the human mind and that this God even took on a human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. That gives us good reason to think that the human mind can grasp at least something about the physical world. At the same time, Scripture teaches that God freely decided to make the world and that he made it out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3). What God does in his freedom can't simply be figured out in advance by our reasoning; we have to observe and discover what the world is actually like and be open to surprises that may not fit our preconceptions. Only when we're confident enough to think our minds can grasp something of reality, and at the same time humble enough to change our minds as we keep experimenting and making new observations of the way God has actually designed something, can scientific progress be made. It's no coincidence, then, that science made the greatest strides in cultures influenced by the Christian worldview.

A science writer who isn't fond of Christianity admits, "It is the Christian world which finally gave birth in a clear, articulate fashion to the experimental method of science itself." The history of science isn't so much a case of Christianity against science as a case of Christianity providing the framework for science to flourish. Faith in Christ helps the scientific work of those who consider themselves Christians, and it even helps the science of many non-Christians. A number of scientists have rejected faith in the biblical God, but they still depend on principles of a structured universe and the power of human observation to discover those structures, and they also depend on other significant principles that are rooted in the Christian worldview—even if they don't realize it.

Conflict and the Scopes Trial

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, conflict between some scientists and Christianity became sharper and more frequent. Is this because Christianity was anti-scientific? No, it would be more accurate to say that some leading scientists were increasingly anti-Christian. Some supporters of random evolution wanted their new anti-

creation religion to be mandatory in public school classrooms. However, a lot of citizens and legislators didn't want public school children indoctrinated in the anti-Christian religion of evolutionary humanism. In the 1920's the Tennessee legislature passed an education funding bill which included a largely symbolic measure forbidding the teaching of evolutionism. That was the occasion for the Scopes trial.

The ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) wanted a showdown and advertised for someone to create a court case. Some citizens of Dayton, Tennessee thought that national attention would attract business to their town, so they encouraged John Scopes to offer himself to the ACLU as a candidate for a court challenge. Scopes was actually a math teacher and athletic coach and had only briefly substituted as a biology teacher. He didn't recall actually teaching evolution and didn't understand it very well, but he had used a textbook which had a short section on the subject. His defenders never put him on the witness stand because of his lack of knowledge (not to mention his uncertainty as to whether he had even taught the subject) might prove embarrassing.

The trial was not a serious criminal prosecution but a staged media event. Scopes was never in danger of going to jail or being fired. When there was a break in the trial, he even went swimming with the assistant prosecutors. William Jennings Bryan, a renowned political figure, prosecuted the case, and Clarence Darrow, the most famous defense attorney in America, represented Scopes. Like many in the ACLU, Darrow was an anti-Christian agonistic and gave famous lectures opposing biblical faith. Darrow managed to make Bryan look awkward at times, but Darrow was also smart enough to quit while he was ahead. Since his client wasn't facing serious consequences anyway, Darrow had Scopes plead guilty of breaking the law and pay a small fine, thus ending the trial before Bryan could give the prosecution's closing statement. Darrow later admitted that he feared Bryan's eloquence and didn't want to give him the last word.

Those are the facts of the Scopes trail. However, news reporters, led by the anti-Christian H. L. Mencken, portrayed the whole episode as a case of Christian bigots viciously attacking an enlightened science teacher and made it sound as though Darrow had proven evolutionism and destroyed the Bible's credibility. Opponents of Christianity still like to give their version of the well-worn tales of Galileo and Scopes, emphasizing that Christianity stifles free inquiry. Knowing the fuller truth about those two trials is important.

Even more important is recognizing our present-day situation. Who is being pressured and prosecuted today? The main persecution is directed against teachers who dare to mention the Creator in their classroom. The ACLU staged the Scopes trial in the name of intellectual freedom, but does the ACLU today defend the right of teachers to point out flaws in Darwinism and present scientific evidence for design by a Creator? No, the ACLU takes such teachers to court. The aim is not freedom *of* religion but freedom *from* religion. That way, students can be indoctrinated in the new religion of secular humanism and its faith in evolution without the God of the Bible.

The Scientist's Friend

Having said all this, let's recognize that the so-called conflict between science and Christianity has been exaggerated, while the fact that science flourished in the soil of a Christian heritage has often been ignored. Where conflict occurs today, it's mostly a

battle between worldviews, Christian versus anti-Christian, not biblical faith versus scientific discovery. Meanwhile, Jesus remains the friend of science, even though some in the scientific establishment reject him.

Does any of this really matter? If you already believe the Bible and trust in Jesus Christ, you have a personal relationship to God that doesn't depend on developments in scientific thought. Why should it matter to a Christian if the Christian worldview did indeed help science to flourish?

Well, one reason is that some Christians feel shaken when they're told that the physical world around them is best explained apart from faith in Christ. It's encouraging to know that genuine science, far from being an enemy of biblical faith, owes an enormous debt to the biblical worldview. Another reason is that all truth is God's truth. Christians shouldn't shun new discoveries about creation, even if some of those discoveries are made by non-Christians. We can reject their false worldviews and anti-religious attacks without rejecting legitimate discoveries. After all, every new finding brings better knowledge of God's creation and a fresh occasion to praise him. Science can add to our appreciation of our Creator and Savior.

But what if you're not a Christian at all? Why should you care about the relationship between Christianity and the flowering of science. Well, if you've been under the impression that Christianity is at odds with scientific knowledge, you can now let go of that misconception. Once you realize that science and technology owe a huge debt to Christianity, you might be more inclined to take Christianity seriously. Science can be good, but it’s not enough. If you focus only on scientific studies, you miss out on the love of the personal Lord and Savior who designed all these things. And you become more likely to use science wrongly, producing the dehumanizing horrors of a brave new world.

Blaise Pascal was a genius in mathematics and science, but he understood that there’s more to life than math and science, and there’s more to God than just being the maker and designer of a rational world. “We only know God through Jesus Christ,” said Pascal. “The Christian’s God does not merely consist of a God who is the Author of mathematical truths and the order of the elements. That is the notion of the heathen… the God of the Christians is a God of love and consolation.”

Do you know this God of love and consolation? Have you even tried to find out about him? If not, then don't accuse Christians of closing their minds to science; you've been closing your mind to Jesus. Shouldn't you at least investigate? If the pioneers of science were operating within a Christian framework, and if even scientists who aren't Christians still depend on many principles derived from the Christian worldview, shouldn't you as a scientific person at least explore what the Bible says and find out about Jesus for yourself? You may find more than just a friendly framework for science; you may find the Creator of the universe as your personal friend.