

Reformation to Thanksgiving

All people owe gratitude to God. Life is His gift. And every good provision in and for life is from Him, who alone deserves our highest thanksgiving. How much more so for the gift of eternal life? This touches the heart and historical roots of our Thanksgiving holiday.

All people owe gratitude to God, but no one understands this better than those whose sins are forgiven, possessing the living hope of eternal life in and through Christ Jesus our Lord. America's Thanksgiving Day is a living legacy to the grace of God, especially in the gospel ("good news") of Christ. There is no greater cause for Thanksgiving Day than the gospel.

The light of history is ever subject to the shades and coverings of present popular interest. People believe what they want to believe about the past—notoriously without authority. In as much as we are able without prejudice and the coverings of present popular interest, let us consider the plain evidence of the well documented light of Thanksgiving history.

Thanksgiving, a Product of the Reformation

This year, we celebrate the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation. What does that have to do with America's Thanksgiving holiday? In the essence of it, everything. America's Thanksgiving holiday is a direct result of the Reformation. To be sure, many providential factors were involved in its fruition, but behind them all is the singular cause that the Reformation labored so fervently to proclaim and steward.

To trace the steps from the Reformation to the first Thanksgiving Day in America, we will look to William Bradford, the second elected governor of the Pilgrim colony, as our guide. Bradford was born in March 1590 in Austerfield, Yorkshire, England. He was born into a Puritan home, becoming acquainted with the Scriptures and demonstrating a true interest in Christ through the gospel at an early age. He began attending meetings of a Puritan congregation that met in the home of William Brewster in a nearby town. At age sixteen, Bradford became a full member of the church. Then, at age seventeen, owing to persecution, he fled his homeland with his beloved congregation to the Netherlands. Several from this Puritan church, including William Bradford, would later leave Holland and head to the New World, becoming the first "Pilgrims" to land on American soil. His personal, eye-witness record, along with letters and journal entries, regarding the events that led to the first Puritan settlement in America were compiled into a book entitled, *Of Plymouth Plantation*. It will be from this record that Bradford guides our steps.¹

¹ Citations will be from William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908). Other references will be noted from Harold Paget's modern English rendering. Bradford's records have also been published under the titles, *History of Plymouth Plantation* (with various spellings of "Plymouth") and *The Mayflower*.

The First Cause

Bradford begins his record with these words:

And first of the occasion and indusments ther unto; the which that I may truly unfould, I must beginne at the very roote and rise of the same. The which I shall endeavor to manefest in a plaine stile, with singuler regard unto the simple trueth in all things, at least as near as my slender judgmente can attaine the same.

It is well knowne unto the godly and judicious, how ever since the first breaking out of the lighte of the gospell in our Honourable Nation of England, (which was the first of nations whom the Lord adorned ther with, affter that grosse darknes of popery which had covered and overspred the Christian worled [world],) what warrs and oppossions ever since, Satan hath raised, maintained, and continued against the Saints, from time to time, in one sorte or other. Some times by bloody death and cruell torments; other whiles imprisonments, banishments, and other hard usages; as being loath his kingdom should goe downe, the trueth prevaile, and the churches of God reverte to their anciente puritie, and recover their primative order, libertie, and bewtie [beauty].

The “very root and rise of the same,” which Bradford says is the “simple truth,” concerning the cause that led to the foundation of the New Plymouth Settlement (which gave us our Thanksgiving Day legacy) was the Reformation. He openly appeals to the widespread knowledge of the Reformation as that “breaking out of the light of the gospel,” which came “after that gross darkness of popery which had covered and overspread the Christian world.” The force behind the Reformation was that “the truth prevail, and the churches of God revert to their ancient purity, and recover their primitive order, liberty, and beauty.” This summarizes a significant principle of the Reformation, and is the very reason why reformers in England were labelled “Puritans.”

The Reformation

Darkness and corruptions abounded in both the world and the church of sixteenth-century Europe. While there were many attempts at moral reform in the church, it wasn’t until the Greek New Testament was printed for the first time on Guttenberg’s printing press that the Reformation officially began. The event that marks its formal launch is Martin Luther’s posting of his Ninety-Five Theses, October 31, 1517. It was a list of arguments against the abuses and errors of the Roman Church in light of the Greek New Testament. It wasn’t a mere moral movement that resulted, but a spiritual revival based on a rediscovery of the gospel in the written Word of God.

Reformation Impact

The Reformation is stunningly more than just an article of church history—the Reformation changed western civilization, and through it the world. Many of the social blessings that we now take for granted were corrupt or non-existent before the Reformation. “To look upon the Reformation of the sixteenth century as only the substitution of one set of theological doctrines for another, or the cleansing of the Church from notorious abuses and corruptions, or even a return of

Christianity to something like primitive purity and simplicity—is to take an inadequate view of its nature and importance.”²

Reformation in England

When Bradford refers to the “honorable nation of England” as being “the first of nations adorned with the light of the gospel” through the Reformation, he may be alluding to John Wycliffe and the Lollards, who preceded Martin Luther by nearly two-hundred years. Wycliffe is regarded as the “Morning Star” of the Reformation, since he was the first to translate the Scriptures into English (from the Latin) and spoke out against the abuses and errors of the Roman Church. His teachings were still used of God to contribute to the Reformation in the day of the Puritans. It is also interesting that before printing the Greek New Testament, Desiderius Erasmus was lecturing at Cambridge University (from 1511 to 1514). It was largely through his influence, and friends that he had made in England, that Reformation writings found eager reception in England. What was largely contended region by region on the Continent, became a matter of national dispute and allegiance in England.

Persecutions of Body

The story behind the English Puritans leaving their homeland and eventually arriving in the New World (America) was primarily driven by religious persecution. Bradford refers to the trials that those who sided with the Reformation in England suffered when he speaks of “wars and oppositions ... against the Saints, from time to time, in one sort or other. Sometimes by bloody death and cruel torments. At other times by imprisonments, banishments, and other hard treatments.”

Bradford likened “the bloody and barbarous persecutions” that the English reformers suffered to that of the ancient Christians, including:

sundrie kinds of tormente, often rackings, and dismembering of their joynts; confiscating of their goods; some bereaved of their native soyle; others departed this life under the hands of the tormentor; and some died in banishmente, and never saw ther cuntrie againe.

1519 - Seven Burned for Teaching the Lord's Prayer in English

The truth of the gospel is worth dying for, and many in England bravely did. Soon after the Reformation started placing the Scriptures into the hands of the people on the Continent, the Roman Church in England increased their grip. Many who had even portions of the Scriptures in English, including Lollards who had the works of Wycliffe, were severely punished. The accounts of martyrdom at Coventry, for instance, are brutal in number and repulsion.

² Warfield, *Works*, 9:461 – citing Charles Beard from his Hibbert Lectures.

Persecutions of Soul

The worst of physical persecutions in England were yet to come. But bodily harm was not the only thing that Bradford and the other Puritans fled from. The more important matter to them was truth. The ability to worship and proclaim Christ according to His Word was the greatest motivating force in the whole of their endeavors.

Bradford notes that,

when [Satan] could not prevaile by these means [of persecution], against the maine trueths of the gospell, but that they began to take rooting in many places, being watered with the blood of the martyrs, and blessed from heaven with a gracious increase; he then began to take him to his ancient stratagemes, used of old against the first Christians. That when by the bloody and barbarous persecutions of the Heathen Emperours, he could not stoppe and subverte the course of the gospell, but that it speedily overspred with a wondrous celeritie the then best known parts of the world, He then begane to sow errors, heresies ...

His basic point is that when physical persecutions did not prevail to extinguish the gospel in England, the “ancient stratagems” of Satan were used. In this case, “errors, heresies, and astonishing dissensions” were the more powerful implements of war against the English reformers.

1521 - King Henry VIII Awarded: Defender of the Faith

Henry VIII, King of England, wrote against Martin Luther, opposing the Reformation in England. He was awarded “Defender of the Faith” by the pope.

1521 - Cardinal Wolsey Burns Luther's Books

Cardinal Wolsey was the king’s favorite church authority in England. He opposed the Reformation in England, ordering all of Luther’s writings to be burned.

1523 - Tyndale Seeks Permission to Translate

William Tyndale, an English scholar of Oxford and Cambridge, sought permission to translate the Bible into English. This was denied, and Tyndale would be outlawed for trying.

1526 - Tyndale's New Testament Translation

Tyndale left England and finished his translation work on the Continent. He published the first English translation of the New Testament from the Greek.

1532 - King Henry Demands Annulment

King Henry sought annulment of his first marriage because his wife did not bear him a son. Henry saw an opportunity to leverage the Reformation to his advantage in this situation.

1534 - Act of Supremacy

King Henry declared himself the head of the Church of England, securing his right to annul his first marriage and set in motion a measure of reform.

1536 - Anne Boleyn Executed

King Henry's marriage to his second wife, Anne Boleyn, was at first full of excitement. Almost immediately, Anne conceived and soon bore Henry a girl, Elizabeth. Henry was disappointed that his child was not a son. Afterwards, she conceived a boy, only to miscarry. She soon fell out of Henry's favor. Anne had also demonstrated a fervent interest in the works of William Tyndale. Through various absurdities, Anne was charged with treason and Henry had her beheaded.

1536 - William Tyndale Martyred

Tyndale was betrayed and imprisoned at Vilvorde Castle near Brussels. After being confined to a dark and damp dungeon for months, Tyndale was finally condemned a heretic and burned at the stake. Immediately before his demise, he cried out in a loud voice with fervent zeal, "Lord! open the king of England's eyes."

1537 - Authorization of the English Bible

Tyndale's dying prayer was answered—at least in part—as it was in the very next year, 1537, that the Puritan John Rogers took Tyndale's work, with completions made by Myles Coverdale, and published the *Matthew's Bible* (a code name), which received approval by King Henry.

1538 - Royal Order to Read the Bible

What the king deemed worthy of burning at the stake just two years prior, he now not only annulled but set his seal to approve. In 1538, he ordered the churches of England: "ye shall discourage no man from the reading or hearing of the Bible, but shall expressly provoke, stir and exhort every person to read the same as that which is the very lively word of God."

1543 - Ban of Certain Bible-reading

King Henry banned Tyndale's translation of the Bible. Additionally, he banned all unauthorized public reading and expositions of Scripture, due to the disorder it was causing in the churches. He also outlawed all private reading of Scripture among the uneducated.

1546 - All Unauthorized Translations of the Bible Outlawed

King Henry outlawed all unauthorized translations of Scripture into English. This prohibition was stronger than before, requiring all such books, including Tyndale's and Coverdale's translations, to be delivered up to appointed officials. Such Bibles were burned by proclamation of

the crown. The reason so few of these editions remain is owing to King Henry's diligence to destroy them.

1547 - King Edward VI

King Henry died in 1547. His son Edward, then only nine years old, was next in line for the throne. Edward and his sister Elizabeth had been raised under Catherine Parr, his last wife who happened to be reform-minded. She employed the finest tutors in the land, which also happened to be reform-minded. As a result, both Edward and Elizabeth would be educated and reared under Reformation influence.

Bloody Mary

When Bradford speaks of the most "cruel torments ... in the days of Queen Mary," he is referring to Queen Mary Tudor, otherwise infamously known as "Bloody Mary"—and for good reason. Bradford writes,

Mr. Foxe recordeth how that besides those worthy martyrs and confessors which were burned in queene Mary's days and otherwise tormented, many (both studients and others) fled out of the land, to the number of 800. And became severall congregations. At Wesel, Frankfort, Basel, Emden, Markpurge, Strasburg and Geneva, etc.

1553 - Queen Mary I

It is said that when Mary Tudor took the throne, she turned the Reformation in England back at least twenty-five years. Under her enforcement, all of the laws that Parliament passed for reform in the Church of England were repealed. Parliament even voted to restore the authority of the pope over the Church of England. As one historian writes, "The work of the Reformation in England was entirely undone."³ She reinstated the Latin Mass, preaching in English was banned, and the works of the reformers were outlawed and destroyed.

It was clear that Mary tried to destroy with violent force the Reformation, which she could not stop with reason or arguments from truth. Under her tyrannical reign, many leading reformers fled to the continent, mostly to Geneva. Among them was John Knox, a reformer whose influence on the Puritans can scarcely be measured.

The English Puritans

Christianity had long been abused in political hands. Civil government tends to assume lordship over the consciences of its subjects. Religion, then, has served as a prime candidate for

³ Kuiper, 226.

wielding and asserting political power.⁴ To some in England, the Reformation was little more than a bright new opportunity for political ideals. But this tendency has never represented those who live and die for Christ, whose lives are not their own and whose citizenship is in heaven. The true Christian in this world has always been an alien, a sojourner, a *pilgrim*.

1558 - Queen Elizabeth I

The day that Queen Mary dies, her sister Elizabeth announced the words of Psalm 118:23 in English, which state, "This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Elizabeth was next heir to the throne and like her half-brother Edward, she was an Evangelical (a reformer). She wasted no time in reversing the course of her half-sister and reestablishing the Church of England.

Many who had fled to the Continent in order to escape persecution during Mary's reign, returned to their homeland with the hope that Elizabeth, like Edward VI, would champion reform. Elizabeth was no simpleton. She read the Greek New Testament, along with the English Bible, every day, and was quite disciplined in prayer. But while Elizabeth was thoroughly not Roman Catholic (she couldn't be since Rome considered her an illegitimate child, thus disqualified from the throne), she had her own ideas about how the Church of England should be run. She approached the situation much more like her father than her half-brother Edward did.

1559 - Act of Supremacy

Within her first year, Queen Elizabeth ordered a new Act of Supremacy. She was proclaimed "supreme governor" (rather than "head") of the Church of England. A new prayer book was needed. It ended up being much like Cranmer's second edition. But like her father, Elizabeth wanted to create her own version of the English Church. Where Henry insisted on a peculiarly English Catholicism, Elizabeth insisted on a peculiarly English Protestantism. She was not interested in the purity of the faith as in conformity to the Scripture, rather she was after conformity to her rule and her faith.

1563 - Elizabethan Settlement

The Queen established a series of changes and laws, including: the Act of Supremacy (1559); the Act of Uniformity (1559); and the Elizabethan Injunctions (1559). These reforms culminated in the revision of Cranmer's Forty-Two Articles of 1553. The official creed of the Church of England became, as it is to this day, the Thirty-Nine Articles (1563). The adoption of these changes is known as the Elizabethan Settlement.

By 1563, the queen considered the Reformation in England to be settled. Elizabeth took more of a middle-ground between the Swiss Reformation and her father's Church of England; partly out

⁴ Today, religion has taken on new sophisticated forms of lordship over the consciences of people, namely social education.

of fear of war with France and Spain, and partly because she had little tolerance for what she considered to be Reformation idealism.

But many of the reformers in England considered her resolutions as leaving the church only half reformed. “Her demand for strict observance of Cranmer’s Book of Common Prayer and Articles of Religion did little to satisfy their longing for the sort of biblical preaching they had experienced in the great Reformed churches on the continent.”⁵ Thus, “the Settlement of 1563 did not satisfy them at all. Because they wished to see the Church purified much more thoroughly, these members of the Church of England were called *Puritans*.”⁶ And “no Puritan could consider the work of reformation complete when the majority of the population still had little or no understanding of justification by faith alone. It was not enough to reform how the church operated; the Reformation was about transforming individual lives, achieving not just an external Protestantism, but an internal, heart-felt evangelicalism.”⁷

The Beginning of “Puritanism”

Elizabeth dismissed the English reformers as an “extremists” faction within *her* Church. Such was a negative caricature that has persisted to this day in one form or another. The term “Puritan” was first used of those who considered the reforms under Queen Elizabeth incomplete. It was a term of derision; an insult.

‘Puritan’ as a name was, in fact, mud from the start. Coined in the early 1560s, it was always a satirical smear word implying peevishness, censoriousness, conceit, and a measure of hypocrisy, over and above its basic implication of religiously motivated discontent with what was seen as Elizabeth’s Laodicean and compromising Church of England. Later, the word gained the further, political connotation of being against the Stuart monarchy and for some sort of republicanism; its primary reference, however, was still to what was seen as an odd, furious, and ugly form of Protestant religion.⁸

But as soon as we move out of hearsay and second-hand opinions, and read them for ourselves, we will see that the contempt heaped upon them was owing to their earnest faith in Christ more than anything else. One of the Puritans, William Perkins (1558-1602), said that the word “Puritan” was “a vile term” unjustly used against them as describing people with perfectionist tendencies.⁹ Leland Ryken suggests that “no group of people has been more unjustly maligned in the twentieth century than the Puritans.”¹⁰ He goes on to demonstrate through primary source documentation that the Puritans were serious people but were not opposed to fun, were not unfashionable in their dress, were not opposed to sports and recreation, were not hostile to the arts, were not dualists who were repelled by the human body and the physical world, were not intolerant of people who

⁵ Beeke, 3-4.

⁶ Kuiper, 250.

⁷ Reeves, 155-157.

⁸ J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 21.

⁹ See *The Works of William Perkins*, 1:342, 3:15.

¹⁰ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 2.

disagreed with them, did not repress normal human feelings, were not legalistic moralists, were not judgmental, but instead delighted in marriage, majored in humility, excelled in self-discipline, labored diligently but were not obsessed with earthly gain, and were passionate for education.¹¹ Increasing numbers of honest researchers of history “now acknowledge that the typical Puritans were not wild men, fierce and freaky, religious fanatics and social extremists, but sober, conscientious, and cultured citizens, persons of principle, determined and disciplined, excelling in the domestic virtues, and with no obvious shortcomings save a tendency to run to words when saying anything important, whether to God or to man.”¹²

The formal principle of the Reformation, *sola scriptura*, was the key issue for the Puritans. Peter Lewis reminds us that “Puritanism as a movement largely began as an endeavour to reform the face of the English Church, and to do so according to the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone. Neither the civil nor ecclesiastical powers, they maintained, had the authority to add to, subtract from, or modify the sufficient, definitive teaching of the New Testament in its pattern of Church government and Church life.”¹³ But this was not the Queen’s policy.

Queen Elizabeth was insistent on conformity to her Anglican order; it was her purpose in the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity of 1559. But this meant that the Church was being determined by Elizabeth and not Scripture.

In matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, was the Church to order her own course as distinct from the monarch, and were the Scriptures to order the Church as distinct from ecclesiastical tradition or expedience? In a word, who rules the Church and the spiritual realm of life-God or man? These were fundamental questions. Had they not been on countless lips in the days of Luther and Calvin? The answer of the Puritans was a confident affirmative for the freedom of the Church under the sole sovereignty of the Scriptures. For this they were prepared to suffer with a determination as grim as it was serene. ... Ecclesiastically, the Puritans were convinced, as we have seen, that the Reformation in England had, because of political expediency, been stunted before it had properly conformed the Church to the simplicity of the New Testament model.¹⁴

Nonconformists

The Reformation in England was unlike anywhere else. Wittenberg, Zurich, Geneva, and numerous other places, witnessed theology leading. But in England, politics would drive the type and degree of reform. Even in its best days, the Reformation in England was a top-down affair. It was this dynamic that concerned the Puritans.

The Puritans could not contend with the queen on a political level. “Having failed to reform the Church from the top down, by parliamentary legislation, the Puritans sought with greater vigour than ever to do so from the bottom up by the persuasion of pulpit, press and personal influence. From here on the real story of Puritanism is the story of its spiritual growth and power, and the

¹¹ Ibid., 2-7.

¹² Packer, x.

¹³ Lewis, 13.

¹⁴ Lewis, 13-14.

history of the progress of Puritanism becomes not the record of councils and convocations, of legislation and counter-legislation, but the history of men whose crusade for a godly Church and a godly State could not be either much hindered or much helped by parliaments and their acts. Puritanism became a grass-roots movement which the legislative scythe could limit but not destroy.”¹⁵

While the Puritans all shared concerns for the purity of the Church, some fell under increasing conviction that the Church should be separate from the State. It was becoming more and more evident that true reform in the Church, according to Scripture, could not be realized under the dictates of the State. Success ventures of independency resulted. These resolves were first demonstrated by individuals; later, by a more formal movement.

New labels were fastened to this group of Puritans. They were called Nonconformists, Separatists, Schismatics, and Dissenters. Like the term Puritans, these too were labels of scorn—and in some ways worse. They were often unjustly accused of seeking to destroy the Church in England, but they openly despised the notion. They loved Christ’s Church and sought only her purity and protection according to the Word of God.

Bradford plainly speaks with a deep sense of loss over the fact that the Puritans were divided on the matter of conformity to the State. The so-called Separatists disdained factions within the Church, agreeing that the Church should be united and conformed, but united and conformed to Scripture rather than to the dictates of the State.

Bradford considered the order of Satanic assault on Christ’s Church in England as coming in the form of (1) physical persecutions, (2) heresies and superstitions, and (3) “bitter contentions, heartburnings, and schisms.” He said that after errors and heresies, Satan began to sow astonishing

dissentions amongst the professours them selves, (working upon their pride and ambition, with other corrupte passions incidente to all mortall men, yea to the saints them selves in some measure) by which wofull effects followed; as not only bitter contentions, and hartburnings, schismes, with other horrible confusions, but Satan tooke occasion and advantage therby to foyst in a number of vile ceremoneys, with many unprofitable cannons and decrees, which have since been as snares to many poore and peaceable souls even to this day.

He later describes the division among the Puritans as a form of persecution against the Church:

[After Satan’s] cruell tragedies, which he by his instrualents put in use every wher in the days of queene Mary and before, he then begane an other kind of warre, and went more closely to worke; not only to [oppress], but even to [ruin] and destroy the kingdom of Christ, by more secrete and subtile means, by kindling the flames of contention and sowing the seeds of discorde and bitter enmitie amongst the proffessors and seeming reformed them selves. For when he could not prevaile by the former means against the principall doctrins of faith, he bente his forte against the holy discipline and outward regimente of the kingdom of Christ, by which those holy doctrines should be conserved, and true pietie maintained amongst the saints and people of God.

¹⁵ Lewis, 14.

Bradford later offers a plain and straightforward statement of the purpose and aim of the Nonconformist Puritans:

The one side [Nonconformist's] laboured to have the right worship of God and discipline of Christ established in the church, according to the simplicitie of the gospell, without the mixture of mens inventions, and to have and to be ruled by the laws of Gods word, dispensed in those offices, and by those officers of Pastors, Teachers, and Elders, etc. according to the Scriptures.

1593 - Act Against Puritans

Elizabeth took action against the Puritans. She accused the Puritans of sedition and disloyalty. "More than ever, Puritanism was now associated with sedition and anarchy. The hunt for the secret press on which the tracts were produced was turned into an excuse to spy out dangerous nonconformity in any Puritan preacher's home. Within a few short years, a legal clampdown on Puritanism was in force, with the 1593 Parliamentary Act Against Puritans, the hanging of separatist leaders, and the placing of many major Puritan figures in dire peril. Now was the time for their enemies to kick them while they were down."¹⁶ This drove many of the Puritans into home gatherings, like the one that William Bradford attended.

1603 - King James I

Upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I, being that she was childless, the next to the throne was her cousin, King James VI of Scotland. In one swift move of providence, Scotland and England became united kingdoms under King James.

Reared on a strict diet of haggis and Calvinism, James was the hope of every Puritan. Now at last, they thought, they would have a properly reformed monarch. And what is more, he was highly educated: the author of numerous treatises, from condemnations of tobacco and witchcraft to works of politics and theology, he would surely appreciate the theological issues at stake. So, when Elizabeth died, before James even made it to London, he was presented with a petition from the Puritans, asking for a number of changes to be made to what they still saw as a slightly 'popish' prayer book.

The Puritans openly denied that they were schismatic and divisive. They submitted their requests to the new king in a petition (*The Millenary Petition*) that they drafted along with signatures from a thousand ministers. "They appealed for changes in the administration of baptism and use of vestments, the need for self-examination before Communion, the replacement of absent bishops with clergy able to preach, and greater restraint by the ecclesiastical courts in excommunicating laypersons and suspending ministers."¹⁷

1604 - Hampton Court Conference

¹⁶ Reeves, 159.

¹⁷ Beeke, 5.

In response to the Puritan's request, King James held a conference at Hampton Court. While James appeared willing to negotiate with the Puritans, he drew the line on the relationship of the Church to the State. In response to the Puritan's request for a presbyterian form of church government, "James said (in his thick Scottish burr) 'agreeth as well with the monarch as God and the Devil. ... Then Jack and Tom and Will and Dick shall meet and at their pleasure censor me.' And that, for James, was the nub of it: reform was all very well, but only so long as it did not involve any chipping-away at his divinely given authority as king."¹⁸ Beeke explains,

Recognizing that his royal supremacy was tied to the English episcopacy, James openly declared his fears: "No bishop, no king." Although he agreed to produce a fresh translation of the Bible to assist English preachers (the King James Version), he demanded that all clergy conform to the liturgy and government of the Church of England. To insure this, the king began a new campaign to impose ceremonial conformity through his bishops.¹⁹

Far too much of God's Word had taken root in their hearts for them to simply ignore their conscience and convictions. The king was not merely governing the state, he was governing Christ's Church. Many simply could not conform. King James responded by imposing ceremonial conformity through his bishops. As a result, nearly ninety ministers were suspended from office between 1604 and 1609. Among those suspended was John Robinson (1575-1625), the pastor of the church that William Bradford (1589-1657) attended. Both Robinson and Bradford would migrate to the Netherlands.

Bradford summarizes their position (with improved English for readability):

When as by the travail and diligence of some godly and zealous preachers, and God's blessing on their labours, as in other places of the land, so in the North parts, many became enlightened by the Word of God and had their ignorance and sins discovered unto them, and began by His grace to reform their lives and make conscience of their was, the work of God was no sooner manifest in them but presently they were both scoffed and scorned by the profane multitude; and the ministers urged with the yoke of subscription, or else must be silenced. And the poor people were so vexed with apparitors and pursuants and the commissary courts, as truly their affliction was not small. Which, notwithstanding, they bore sundry years with much patience, till they were occasioned by the continuance and increase of these troubles, and other means which the Lord raised up in those days, to see further into things by the light of the Word of God. How not only these base and beggarly ceremonies were unlawful, but also that the lordly and tyrannous power of the prelates ought not to be submitted unto; which thus, contrary to the freedom of the gospel, would load and burden men's consciences and by their compulsive power make a profane mixture of persons and things in the worship of God. And that their offices and callings, courts and canons, etc. were unlawful and antichristian: being such as have no warrant in the Word of God, but the same that were used in popery and still retained. Of which a famous author thus writeth in his Dutch commentaries, at the coming of King James into England: *The new king (saith he) found there established the reformed religion according to the reformed religion of King Edward VI, retaining*

¹⁸ Reeves, 160.

¹⁹ Beeke, 5.

or keeping still the spiritual state of the bishops, etc. after the old manner, much varying and differing from the reformed churches in Scotland, France and the Netherlands, Ernden, Geneva, etc., whose reformation is cut, or shapen much nearer the first Christian churches, as it was used in the Apostles' time.

So it was that “James I countered his Presbyterian cradle with an episcopalian cross and, seeing that Puritanism meant a serious limiting of his kingly 'rights' and powers, swore to the Puritan leaders that he would 'harrie [harass] them out of the land'. But while James 'harried' them out of Old England, God hurried them into the New.” Lewis goes on to explain that “the Puritan mind gave rise to thoughts on spiritual principles which were to have far-reaching effects in secular as well as religious life—in the State as well as the Church.”²⁰

Pilgrims

1607 - Flight to Holland

Bradford reports that after King James persisted in his opposition to further reform the Church by freeing her from the “shackles” of the State, persecutions of the Nonconformists increased. Before resolving to leave their native soil,

they were hunted and persecuted on every side, until their former afflictions were but as fleabittings in comparison. For some were taken and clapped up in prison, others had their houses beset and watched night and day, and hardly escaped their hands; and the most were fain to flee and leave their houses and habitations, and the means of their livelihood.

These reformers, loving both the Church and their nation, were constrained to leave; in accord with the king's promise that he would “harrie” [harass] them out of the land. Eventually, some of the local congregations covenanted together to leave their beloved country:

So many, therefore, of these professors as saw the evil of these things in these parts, and whose hearts the Lord had touched with heavenly zeal for His truth, they shook off this yoke of antichristian bondage, and as the Lord's free people joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, 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 endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them. And that it cost them something this ensuing history will declare.

These Puritans, now considered “Pilgrims” because of their sojourning as exiles, left with full awareness and anticipation of continued persecution and hardship.

Being thus constrained to leave their native soil and country, their lands and livings, and all their friends and familiar acquaintance, it was much; and thought marvellous by many. But to go into a country they knew not but by hearsay, where they must learn a new language and get their livings they knew not how, it being a dear place and subject to the miseries of war, it was by many thought an adventure almost desperate; a case intolerable and a misery worse than death.

²⁰ Lewis, 16.

Especially seeing they were not acquainted with trades nor traffic (by which that country cloth subsist) but had only been used to a plain country life and the innocent trade of husbandry. But these things did not dismay them, though they did sometimes trouble them; for their desires were set on the ways of God and to enjoy His ordinances; but they rested on His providence, and knew Whom they had believed.

What an indictment against a low-view of the Church today. Few today even attend a local church on a regular basis, let alone make their worship of God of such importance that they would move their entire family to a foreign land, suffering a multiplicity of uncertainties and dangers.

They sought to flee to Amsterdam because they heard that “there was freedom of religion for all” there. They sold most of all they had, left their farms and homes, and paid extraordinary rates to sail from England to Holland. After payment, they were often betrayed and either left without transportation or apprehended and brought before the English authorities and were imprisoned for a short time. Bradford recounts a couple of instances of these experiences:

A large number of them had decided to take passage from Boston in Lincolnshire, and for that purpose had hired a ship wholly to themselves, and made agreement with the captain to be ready at a convenient place on a certain day to take them and their belongings. After long waiting and great expense — he had not kept day with them — he came at last and took them aboard at night. But when he had secured them and their goods he betrayed them, having arranged beforehand with the searchers and other officers to do so. They then put them in open boats, and there rifled and ransacked them, searching them to their shirts for money, — and even the women, further than be came modesty, — and took them back to the town and made a spectacle of them to the multitude that came flocking on all sides to see them. Being thus rifled and stripped of their money, books, and other property, they were brought before the magistrates, and messengers were sent to inform the Lords of the Council about them. The magistrates treated them courteously, and showed them what favour they could; but dare not free them until order came from the council-table. The result was, however, that after a month's imprisonment, the majority were dismissed, and sent back to the places whence they came; but seven of the leaders were kept in prison, and bound over to the Assizes.²¹

In the second account, Bradford explains that a number of families negotiated a fare with a Dutchman and arranged to be picked up on the shore of Hull. The women and children were first sent by a small boat and the men arrived by land. But the women and children became stuck in a creek, being grounded at low tide. The ship that came for them sent for some of the men to begin boarding when the captain spotted a large number of horses and soldiers approaching on the countryside. Immediately he weighed anchor and hoisted sail. The men who were at that time loading the ship were in great distress, crying and yelling for their wives and children left thus to be captured. The men then encountered a fierce storm that lasted fourteen days. They nearly sank. When one of the sailors cried out, “We sink, we sink,” the Puritan men cried out, “Yet Lord, Thou

²¹ Modernized English by Harold Paget.

canst save; yet Lord, Thous canst save!" The women, children, and remaining men were apprehended by the English authorities and imprisoned for a short time. Bradford recounts:

But it was pitiful to see these poor women in their distress. What weeping and crying on every side: some for their husbands carried away in the ship; others not knowing what would become of them and their little ones; others again melted in tears, seeing their poor little ones hanging about them, crying for fear and quaking with cold! Being thus apprehended, they were hurried from one place to another, till in the end the officers knew not what to do with them; for to imprison so many innocent women and children only because they wished to go with their husbands, seemed unreasonable and would cause an outcry; and to send them home again was as difficult, for they alleged, as was the truth, that they had no homes to go to, — for they had sold or otherwise disposed of their houses and livings.

Eventually, in God's good providence, they "met together again with no small rejoicing."

The Congregation at Leyden

The Puritans were finally free to worship God according to the Scriptures. The following report reflects their testimony while in Holland:

it may be spoken to the honor of God and without prejudice to any, that such was the true piety, the humble zeal and fervent love of this people ... towards God and His ways, and the singleheartedness and sincere affection one towards another, that they came as near the primitive pattern of the first churches as any other church of these later times have done, according to their rank and quality.

In a letter to Sir Edwin Sandys in London, John Robinson and William Brewster explained that the Puritans there were:

Knit together as a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord, of the violation whereof we make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we do hold ourselves straitly tied to all care of each other's good, and of the whole by every one and so mutually.

One of the magistrates said in a public reproof of another group in the same city, "These English have lived amongst us now these twelve years, and yet we never had any suit or accusation come against any of them; but your strifes and quarrels are continual."

But living in Holland was difficult for them. They had to learn a new form of commerce and language. Most of them were farmers and were now not able to provide for their families as they once had. Several factors were conspiring upon them to consider departing for another land. Bradford explains their reasoning:

After they had lived here for some eleven or twelve years, — the period of the famous truce between the Low Countries and Spain, — several of them having died, and many others being now old, the grave mistress, Experience, having taught them much, their prudent governors began to apprehend present dangers and to scan the future and think of timely remedy. After much thought and discourse on the subject, they began at length to incline to the idea of removal to some other place; not out of any new-fangledness or other such giddy humour, which often

influences people to their detriment and danger, but for many important reasons, the chief of which I will here briefly touch upon.

The first reason given was that they were intent on reaching more Englishmen and concerned about attrition. Their vision was not an “us four and no more,” ingrown separatism.

First, they saw by experience that the hardships of the country were such that comparatively few others would join them, and fewer still would bide it out and remain with them. Many who came and many more who desired to come, could not endure the continual labour and hard fare and other inconveniences which they themselves were satisfied with. ... Some even preferred prisons in England to this liberty in Holland, with such hardships. But it was thought that if there could be found a better and easier place of living, it would attract many and remove this discouragement.

The second reason given had a discerning eye towards providence and timing.

Secondly, they saw that though the people generally bore these difficulties very cheerfully, and with resolute courage, being in the best strength of their years ; yet old age began to steal on many of them, and their great and continual labours, with other crosses and sorrows, hastened it before their time; so that it was not only probable, but certain, that in a few more years they would be in danger of scattering by the necessities pressing upon them.

The third reason was owing to their love of their families. The practical and serious consequences that the necessity of hard labors was having on their families was threatening. But they perceived an even greater danger: the predominating influence of apostasy all around them. They were truly concerned for the spiritual and physical welfare and future vitality of their families.

Thirdly, as necessity was a task-master over them, so they themselves were forced to be ... Many of their children, who were of the best disposition and who had learned to bear the yoke in their youth and were willing to bear part of their parents' burden, were their minds were free and willing, their bodies bowed under the weight and became decrepit in early youth, — the vigour of nature being consumed in the very bud, as it were.

But that which was more lamentable, and of all sorrows most heavy to be borne, was that many of [our] children, by these occasions and the great licentiousness of youth in that country, and the manifold temptations of the place, were drawn away by evil examples into extravagant and dangerous courses, getting the reins off their necks and departing from their parents. Some became soldiers, others took upon them far voyages by sea, and others some worse courses tending to dissoluteness and the danger of their souls, to the great grief of their parents and dishonour of God. So that they saw their posterity would be in danger to degenerate and be corrupted.

The fourth reason given was related to their missionary zeal to advance the gospel.

Last and not least, they cherished a great hope and in ward zeal of laying good foundations, or at least of making some way towards it, for the propagation and advance of the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in the remote parts of the world, even though they should be but stepping stones to others in the performance of so great a work.

In voicing their intentions, they were met with much opposition. Many discouraged them from departing, with many warnings of the dangers that await such an expedition. Other factors that influenced their thinking was the hearing of the new-found land, called Virginia, and the report of encroaching war from the Spaniards.

1617-1620 - Departure to the New World

After humble prayers to God for His protection and assistance, and a general conference, they consulted what particular place to pitch upon.

At first, they entertained the possibility of settling in Guiana. But mostly out of fear of harassment from the Spaniards, they decided against it. Then there was the proposal to settle in Virginia, but,

it was objected that if they lived among the English who had settled there, or so near them as to be under their government, they would be in as great danger of persecution for their religion as if they lived in England, — and it might be, worse; while, if they lived too far off, they would have neither help nor defence from them.

Therefore,

At length the conclusion was reached that they should live as a separate body, by themselves, under the general government of Virginia; and that through their friends they should sue his majesty to be pleased to allow them freedom of religion. That this might be granted they were led to hope by some prominent persons of rank and influence, who had become their friends.

So they sent two members of the congregation to England to seek legal approval from the king. They applied for a patent, but was refused. However, the Virginia Company appeared anxious to have them and were willing to help get their approval, but ultimately their efforts proved impossible.

The Puritans were still faced with seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. They did not have permission or means for the voyage. But, in the providence of God, on June 19, 1619, a patent was at last granted by the London Virginia Company and confirmed under the company's seal. King James promised not to molest them if they were peaceable.

According to their own words, written to the king's representative for the Virginia colony, regarding their interests:

We verily believe and trust that the Lord is with us, unto Whom and Whose service we have given ourselves in many trials; ...

We are not like some, whom small things discourage, or small discontents cause to wish themselves at home again. We know what we can expect both in England and in Holland, and that we shall not improve our material well-being by our departure; whereas, should we be forced to return, we could not hope to regain our present position, either here or elsewhere during our lives, which are now drawing towards their periods.

They were not seeking personal gain, wealth, or power; they sought after the grace of God in their “simplicity of heart.” The Spanish and French had been in the Americas now for over a hundred years, but their expeditions were not in pursuit of freedom of worship. The Puritan pilgrims were pursuing a new frontier with freedom of conscience and liberty of worship according to the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*. They were not a group of contracted men seeking to bring back goods, they were families seeking a new life under God’s government—they called it New Canaan, not New England.

But they still had no financial means for the voyage. The great problem was profitability. The Virginia Company was penniless and the prospect of the Pilgrims was not lucrative. In desperation, the Puritans tried to enter into a contract with some Dutch merchants if only they came under the Dutch government. But, again, in the providence of God, help came at this time from Thomas Weston, a London merchant, who had visited the congregation in Leyden. He offered them a financial advance and supplied them with shipping in exchange for furs and wood. The Puritans promised to pay them back as soon as they were able.

Finally, after many delays and discouragements while attempting to depart, 102 of the Puritans from the Holland settlement, after traveling to Southampton, set sail September 6, 1620, on a leaky and worn cargo ship named “Mayflower.” The voyage was quite treacherous, appearing doubtful that they would survive, let alone reach their intended destination.

1620 - Arrival at Cape Cod

After the death of a crewman and many trials on the voyage, the Pilgrims came upon the land of Cape Cod on November 11, 1620.

William Bradford records their praise upon arrival:

What, then, could now sustain them but the spirit of God, and His grace? Ought not the children of their fathers rightly to say: Our fathers were Englishmen who came over the great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and He heard their voice and looked on their adversity ... Let them therefore praise the Lord, because He is good, and His mercies endure forever...Let them confess before the Lord His loving kindness, and His wonderful works before the sons of men!

1620 - The Mayflower Compact

On December 11, prior to disembarking the ship, they signed the “Mayflower Compact,” America’s original document of civil government and the first to introduce self-government. The document reads:

In ye name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyall subjects of our dread soveraigne Lord, King James, by ye grace of God, of Great Britaine, France, & Ireland king, defender of ye faith, etc., having undertaken, for ye glorie of God, and advancemente of ye Christian faith, and honour of our king & countrie, a voyage to plant ye first colonie in ye Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly & mutually in ye presence of God, and one of another, covenant & combine our selves together into a civill body politick, for our

better ordering & preservation & furtherance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hearof to enacte, constitute, and frame such just & equall lawes, ordinances, acts, constitutions & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete & convenient for ye generall good of ye Colonie, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In witnes wherof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cap-Codd ye 11, of November, in ye year of ye raigne of our soveraigne lord, King James, of England, France, & Ireland ye eighteenth, and by Scotland ye fiftie fourth. Anno Domini 1620.

1620 - Plymouth Rock Landing

They disembarked the Mayflower in late December, officially setting foot on what was later called Plymouth Rock. Upon their landing, the Pilgrims conducted a prayer service and then began building shelters. Starvation and sickness afflicted them for the next 3 months, to the point of losing 51 men, women, and children (half of their congregation). With the assistance of some friendly Native Americans, in particular an English-speaking Indian named Squanto, their 1621 harvest provided more than they needed. Bradford records,

And they found the Lord to be with them in all their ways, and to bless their outgoings and incomings, for which let His holy name have the praise forever, to all posterity.

1621 - First Thanksgiving

It was from the 1621 harvest that the Pilgrims celebrated the harvest bounty with the Indians, in the form of an English-style feast. This is what is commonly referred to as the “First Thanksgiving” (though not repeated annually at first). Bradford’s record of Squanto’s death illustrates the kind relationship that these Puritans had secured with the natives of the land, being quite unlike many of the settlers before them:

Here Squanto fell ill of Indian fever, bleeding much at the nose,—which the Indians take for a symptom of death,—and within a few days he died. He begged the Governor to pray for him, that he might go to the Englishmen’s God in Heaven, and bequeathed several of his things to some of his English friends, as remembrances. His death was a great loss.

1623 - Proclamation of a Day of Thanksgiving

On November 29, 1623, three years after the Pilgrims’ arrival and two years after the first Thanksgiving, Governor William Bradford made an official proclamation for a Day of Thanksgiving:

To all ye Pilgrims:

In as much as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetable, and has made the forests to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as he has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience; now I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at ye meeting house, on ye hill, between the hours of 9

and 12 in the day time, on Thursday, November ye 29th, of the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and twenty-three, and the third year since ye Pilgrims landed on ye Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to ye pastor and render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings.

William Bradford, Ye Governor of Ye Colony.

The Puritan Legacy

The definitions of 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism' have been, since their earliest use in England, a matter of crowded debate and widespread confusion. National, political and social elements which were closely allied with the idea of Puritanism at various stages of its progress have largely obscured the vital religious and spiritual meaning of the term. Without attempting an exhaustive definition we may say that essential Puritanism grew out of three great areas: the New Testament pattern of personal piety, sound doctrine and a properly ordered Church-life, and it is the mingling and blending together of all three of these emphases which made English Puritanism the astonishment and the inspiration it was and is still.²²

As reformers and children of the Reformation, the English Puritans have given us a legacy worthy of stewarding.

1. **Scripture Alone** – The singular most uniting conviction of all Puritans was their commitment to the Word of God as the highest authority in their lives. This meant that the Scriptures should be translated and made available to everyone. The fruit of these convictions led to various translations such as Tyndale's, the Geneva Bible, and the King James Version. *Sola Scriptura* also meant that governments, ecclesiastical and civil, are not above law. Scripture is above all. The Puritan vision of liberty was not anarchy, but rather order under God's law. This was demonstrated in the civil sphere by their drafting of the Mayflower Compact.
2. **Faith Alone** – Their highest ambition was explicitly the glory of God in the salvation of people through the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was the Puritans who would give us the summary statement: Man exists to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Their passion for freedom within the Church was first concerned with idolatry and second with the salvation of souls. They were opposed to every possible distraction to the simple gospel and despised the apostasy of a works-based religion.
3. **Freedom of Conscience** – Because they had such a strong conviction of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) and *sola fide* (faith alone), they pioneered the concept of the rule of conscience in the English world. If salvation was by faith alone, then every man's conscience is of supreme importance. In a works-based religion, salvation could be had by simply conforming to the order of the whole. But through the Reformation, the Puritans saw that salvation was a matter of the heart and not conformity to a religious system and external order. Freedom of thought and liberty of conscience is a trademark of the Puritans, which paved the way for the establishment of religious freedom in the United States of America.
4. **Personal Responsibility** – As a result of cultivating a strong sense of conscience, personal responsibility became crucial part of their daily life ethic. If every man is free in conscience,

²² Lewis, 11.

then every man must be responsible. With increased freedom comes increased responsibility. This too is a Puritan legacy that proved formative in the foundation of our country.

5. **Separation of Church and State** – Undeniable is the principle championed by the Puritans that the Church of God is not a Church under any other authority. The Puritans were the first to formally establish this principle through the Reformation. This did not mean that the Church was without any relation to the State. On the contrary, they believed that the Church should influence the State, not that the State should influence the Church. It was the legacy of their views on both Church and State that proved vastly instrumental in the development of our government. But we have failed to understand the meaning of the separation of Church and State if we allow regression to empower the State to interfere in matters of the Church. Today, it is largely misused to impose limitations on the Church rather than as originally intended, to impose limitations on the State.
6. **Grace Alone** – Finally, the Puritan were a people of unprecedented humility. They knew and openly confessed that they were unworthy of the salvation extended to them in Christ. It was not their accomplishments that made them acceptable to God, it was the grace of God alone. This enabled them to suffer much for His sake. They were bold to risk much because their view of God was so refreshingly large. They were freed to pursue the glory of God no matter the cost. It was their perspective that they deserved no good thing in this life that yielded such a profound thankfulness of heart, even amid the trials and travails. It was the Puritan's conviction of grace alone that gave us the legacy of Thanksgiving! Well does Lewis say,

[The Puritans] treasured a high conception of the sovereignty of God in providence and grace, and reflected this in the tranquility with which they were able to carry themselves in the stormiest experiences and the forcefulness with which they were able to show the desperate needs and the unfailing resort of fallen man. If their doctrine of God elevated them, their doctrine of sin humbled them. Recognising their own propensity to sin as well as the potential for evil in fallen human nature at large they did not tire of exposing sin as the plague of plagues and root of all man's ills. In their books and sermons they followed the devious course of sin in all its guises, demolishing self-confidence and pointing men to that salvation which could be of grace alone.²³

Puritan Legacy of Thanksgiving

A 1918 history text book states the following:

It is the special glory of the Pilgrim Fathers that through scenes of gloom and misery they showed the way to those who were willing to brave the dangers of the wilderness in order to win the right to worship God as they pleased.

A small Puritan poem portrays this same sentiment:

*What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine!*

²³ Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism*, 13.

*Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod:
They have left unstained what there they found—
Freedom to worship God.*

A Puritan Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving:

O My God, Thou fairest, greatest, first of all objects, my heart admires, adores, loves thee, for my little vessel is as full as it can be, and I would pour out all that fullness before thee in ceaseless flow.

When I think upon and converse with thee ten thousand delightful thoughts spring up, ten thousand sources of pleasure are unsealed, ten thousand refreshing joys spread over my heart, crowding into every moment of happiness.

I bless thee for the soul thou hast created, for adorning it, sanctifying it, though it is fixed in barrens soil; for the body thou has given me, for preserving its strength and vigour, for providing sense to enjoy delights, for the ease and freedom of my limbs, for hands, eyes, ears that do thy bidding; for thy royal bounty providing my daily support, for a full table and overflowing cup, for appetite, taste, sweetness, for social joys of relatives and friends, for ability to serve others, for a heart that feels sorrows and necessities, for a mind to care for my fellow-men, for opportunities of spreading happiness around, for loved ones in the joys of heaven, for my own expectation of seeing thee clearly.

I love thee above the powers of language to express, for what thou art to thy creatures.

Increase my love, O my God, through time and eternity.

A Puritan Prayer of Consecration and Worship

My God, I feel it is heaven to please Thee, and to be what Thou wouldst have me be. O that I were holy as Thou art holy, pure as Christ is pure, perfect as Thy Spirit is perfect! These, I feel, are the best commands in Thy Book, and shall I break them? must I break them? am I under such a necessity as long as I live here?

Woe, woe is me that I am a sinner, that I grieve this blessed God, who is infinite in goodness and grace! O if He would punish me for my sins, it would not wound my heart so deep to offend Him; But though I sin continually, He continually repeats His kindness to me.

At times I feel I could bear any suffering, but how can I dishonour this glorious God? What shall I do to glorify and worship this best of beings? O that I could consecrate my soul and body to His service, without restraint, for ever! O that I could give myself up to Him, so as never more to attempt to be my own! or have any will or affections that are not perfectly conformed to His will and His love! But, alas, I cannot live and not sin.

O may angels glorify Him incessantly, and, if possible, prostrate themselves lower before the blessed King of heaven! I long to bear a part with them in ceaseless praise; but when I have done all I can to eternity I shall not be able to offer more than a small fraction of the homage that the glorious God deserves. Give me a heart full of divine, heavenly love.