

I. English Civil Wars

A. REVIEW

Discuss the Elizabethan Settlement

Discuss the Puritan reaction.

James I 1603

Charles I 1626

Map of England

That brings us to the Puritans. Who were they?

Jacques Barzun: “Throughout western culture the image aroused by the word Puritan is killjoy. In the United States he is the thin-lipped New Englander who passed ‘blue laws’ against all innocent pleasures, his only pastime being to hang witches.”¹

The caricature comes from popular literature such as *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Crucible*. But the facts quickly contradict this caricature.

In fact, the Puritans wore bright clothes, danced, were excellent businessmen, ardently promoted higher education, were the first to allow multiple religious denominations in one country, and knew how to enjoy life.

When the good ship *Arabella* sailed for New England in the 1630s as part of the Great Migration of Puritans, she carried 10,000 gallons of wine (50,000 fifths), and forty two tons of beer, but only fourteen tons of fresh water.² When the Indian, Squanto, walked into the hut of the first Pilgrim³ settlers at Plymouth Colony they immediately did what all good Puritans do—they offered him rum and ale.

Seven worldview conflicts between Puritanism vs. Elizabeth’s middle way.

1. Each individual, because he/she is made in God’s image, is sacred and equal in value vs. British class system.

¹ Barzun, Jacques, *From Dawn to Decadence*, Harper Collins, New York, 2000, pg 261

² Willison, George F., *Saints & Strangers*, Time Inc., 1945, pg 140

³ The Pilgrims that sailed on the Mayflower were a branch of the greater Puritan movement.

2. Subsidiarity—emphasis on family vs. emphasis on central government.
3. Freedom of Conscience vs. enslavement of conscience.
4. Rights are Inalienable (“Freeborn John” Lillburne)) vs. Rights are from governmental.
5. Limited Government vs. Divine Right of Kings.
6. Lex Rex vs. Rex Lex.
7. The priesthood of all believers vs. the king through his bishops mediates God’s word to his people.

The collision between these two worldviews precipitated a Civil War.

B. OLIVER CROMWELL

On a cold January day in 1649, King Charles I, going to his execution, stepped before a hushed London crowd of 10,000. He ascended the platform, wished his executioner well, and knelt thrusting his head forward onto a dry chopping block. The ax fell, severing his head from his neck. Then the executioner lifted the king’s head and cried, “**Behold the head of a traitor.**”⁴

The unthinkable had happened. A “Christian” nation had committed regicide. It had put its king to death. Spontaneously, an audible groan pulsed through the anxious throng, “a groan, said an eyewitness, ‘as I never heard before and desire I may never hear again’”⁵ —a groan that represented the sentiment of many Englishmen and almost all contemporary Europeans.

Few recognize history’s great turning points when they occur. The execution of Charles I was no exception. The ideals of the Reformation had reached full expression, affecting even the sphere of politics. *Ideas have consequences.* The Puritan movement was the vehicle in which the reformation ideas rode. They terminated in Charles’s execution— one of the great turning points in the last 500 years.

⁴ Fraser, Antonia, *Cromwell, The Lord Protector*, Knopf, New York, 1974, pg 291

⁵ Ibid, pg 291

And, no one was more single mindedly devoted to the Bible, and the political implications of its truths than the Puritan, Oliver Cromwell (1599-1659), one of the men primarily responsible for the king's beheading. His name divides people into two camps—hater and lover.

Monarchy is the best and most efficient form of government if the monarch has the character of Cromwell.

He was England's greatest seventeenth century statesman. He was a military genius who, despite the complete lack of any formal military training, was never defeated in battle.

To his dismay, he eventually replaced the beheaded king, ruling England as Lord Protector for almost ten years. Although he was offered the crown and the monarchy, he declined both.

Oliver Cromwell rose higher in status and prestige than any other commoner in English history.

Ideas have consequences. (Cultural Marxism, CRT, WOKE ideology).

To the ideas proclaimed by Cromwell and his Puritan peers, we owe most of our religious and political liberties, the emergence of capitalism, the birth of the scientific revolution, and the advent of religious tolerance. Cromwell was fully committed to these Puritan ideals.

Who was Oliver Cromwell, and why should we care to know about him today?

Cromwell was born in 1599 to a gentleman farmer in the vicinity of Cambridge.

At age 16 he entered Cambridge to study law, but when his father died, he left Cambridge after only one year to care for his mother and siblings.

He was converted to Puritanism in his twenties. He became an avid daily student of the Bible possessing a rich and deep prayer life.

In his late twenties he was elected a member of Parliament to represent the district of Huntington. It was the last Parliament called by Charles before the ten-year absence of parliament.

He led an utterly non distinguished life for his first 43 years.

Although Cromwell's background was that of a humble farmer, he possessed a gift for military leadership that neither he nor his friends foresaw. In 1642 the English Civil War began. It was a war between Parliament and the Crown. Knowing nothing about the military, he returned home to raise a troop of cavalry to support Parliament's army.

His martial gifts made themselves known early, giving him a decisive role in the Parliamentary victories of Marston Moor (1644), (where he was first nicknamed 'Old Ironsides'), and later Naseby (1645).

As his successes mounted, Parliament increased his responsibilities. Soon he commanded armies not companies.

He recruited soldiers with deep piety and vibrant faith.

Ignoring established custom, he promoted officers on the basis of ability not social class.

His troops marched into battle singing the Psalms. His army set aside special seasons for repentance and fasting. They devoted themselves to the preaching of their Puritan Chaplains. For the first time in European history his army enjoyed denominational pluralism. (Anglicans, Quakers, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc.)

And, everywhere Oliver went, victory followed.

Firth: "Cromwell succeeded in inspiring them not only with implicit confidence in his leadership, but with something of his own high enthusiasm. He had the power of influencing masses of men which Napoleon possessed. So he made an army on which, as Clarendon said, "victory seemed entailed—an army whose order and discipline, whose sobriety and manners, whose courage and success, made it famous and terrible over the world."⁶

In 1645-46 Parliament decisively defeated the King's armies at Naseby, and the first Civil War ended.

King Charles agreed to share power with Parliament, allowing some liberty of conscience, agreeing to replace Bishops with a Presbyteries.

⁶ Firth, Charles Harding. Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England (Kindle Locations 5315-5319). Unknown. Kindle Edition.

However, behind the scenes Charles deceitfully outmaneuvered Parliament, enlisting the aid of Ireland and Scotland to start a second civil war.

In July of 1648 Scotland attacked England on behalf of the King, and the second Civil War began. It cost thousands of lives and much suffering.

In fact, a greater percentage of the English population died in this Civil War than any other war England has participated in.

Cromwell's army quickly defeated the Irish and the Scotch. Parliament, controlled by the Puritans, then felt bound to apply justice without favoritism, even to the King.

Charles had broken the law. He had broken his word. He had committed treason against Parliament. Like all men, he must be judged impartially. The King was not above, but under the same law of God as his citizens.

Cromwell and his peers realized that the Civil War would never end as long as Charles was alive.

In January of 1649 Parliament tried Charles I for treason, found him guilty, and executed him in the fashion of men.

Without Cromwell's leadership and commitment to biblical justice it would not have happened. This event was a fruit of Lex Rex, and it was the genesis of modern liberty. It grew from the compost of the biblical presuppositions preached by the English Puritans, which they got from the Bible.

Cromwell and his men replaced the King with Parliament, hoping that godly members of Parliament would seize the reins of power and initiate a period of peace and justice. But Parliament fell into such bickering and infighting that it proved ineffective and could not rule.

To prevent chaos, Cromwell temporarily assumed the levers of power. Parliament offered him the crown in 1657, but he refused.

Very reluctantly, he ruled as Lord Protector until his death in 1659. His reign was a time of great economic prosperity and peace for England. It was the beginning of the British Empire, the beginning of an English standing army and navy.

Despite opinions to the contrary, Cromwell was a man of sincerity, tolerance, and godliness. For example, during the first Civil War Parliament raised his pay to 1600 pounds, an immense sum of money in those days, but Oliver returned 1,000 pounds per year to the war effort.⁷ After he became Lord Protector he extended religious toleration to Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists—unheard of leniency in his day. He brought the Jews back from the continent.

In fact, he was the first modern head of state to let different denominations freely operate in the one country.

His letters reveal a man of deep piety, sound biblical learning, and unshakable faith. For example, to his daughter in law he wrote, "*I desire you both to make it above all things your business to seek the Lord: to be frequently calling upon Him, that He would manifest Himself to you in His Son.*"⁸ This same Christ-centered attitude animates his correspondence to family, friends, and statesman.

Antonia Fraser: A cooler age might deny Cromwell the epithet of Hero. But it cannot deny him his greatness, the one quality which no man who knew him, friend or foe, tried to wrest from him. With all Cromwell's faults, his passions and his plans, it was John Maidston, his own servant, from a traditionally unheroic vantage point, who spoke the final epitaph on the Protector: "A larger soul hath seldom dwelt in a house of clay."⁹

C. THE GREAT ROYALIST MIGRATION FROM 1650-55.

20-30,000 Royalists fled to Virginia, laying the foundation the Southern States.

Albion's Seed.

Let's turn to a famous soldier that fought in Cromwell's army.

D. JOHN BUNYAN

In 1660 England asked Charles II to return and assume his father's crown.

⁷ Ibid, pg 81

⁸ Ibid, pg 98

⁹ Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), pg 706

Charles asked John Owen (1616-83) why he went to hear the preaching of an uneducated tinker (an old name for a blacksmith)? The King was amazed that a man of Owen's prominence would stoop to associate with a tinker.

Owen entered Oxford at age 13, held postgraduate degrees, and had written voluminously on Christian theology. He had been Vice Chancellor (President) of Oxford.

In a day when virtually every minister in England graduated from either Cambridge or Oxford, this tinker possessed no formal education beyond the third grade.

The tinker lived in a small cottage in the obscure village of Bedford, but Owen walked in King's palaces. The tinker preached to a church that met in an old barn. (At its peak it might have numbered 300). Owen preached in England's great cathedrals.

Looking the King firmly in the eye, Owen answered, "*May it please your Majesty, could I possess the tinker's ability for preaching, I would willingly relinquish all my learning.*"¹⁰

The "tinker" was John Bunyan (1628-88), Puritan pastor and author of *Pilgrim's Progress*. (250 million copies sold).

Like the Anabaptists Bunyan believed in credo baptism. This was rare in the 17th century.

But unlike the anabaptists, he was Reformed.

Bunyan was Bible-saturated. As Spurgeon later noted, "Prick him anywhere; his blood is Bibles, the very essence of the Bible flows from him."¹¹

We know little about John Bunyan's youth. He was born in 1628 in the little village of Elstow, about 50 miles Northeast of London. The exact date of his birth is unknown. At age 16 he enlisted in Oliver Cromwell's army and fought with the Puritans against King Charles I.

¹⁰ *John Owen*, Prince of Puritans, Andrew Thomson, pg 124, (Christian Focus Publications, 1996, Fern, Ross-shire, Great Britain)

¹¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Pictures From Pilgrim's Progress*, pg 4 (1998-2001, Ages Software, Rio, WI)

He was discharged in his early twenties and married. His first wife bore him four children. The oldest child, a daughter, was born blind. We don't even know his first wife's name.

After a lengthy agony of soul, similar to Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, he was converted to Christ in his mid-twenties. At age twenty-five he began to preach, and by thirty he was a part time village preacher. He worked the forge and anvil by day and preached the gospel by night.

His ministry began in the late 1650s, just as Cromwell's reign was ending. His congregation was small, but because of the Puritan emphasis on freedom of conscience, he was left alone by the State.

In 1658 his first wife, name not known, died.

In 1659 Cromwell died.

In this environment Bunyan received Christ's call to preach. He knew it would be costly. To complicate matters his wife was now dead, leaving him a poor widower with four small children.

Bunyan knew he would be jailed soon, so he asked an 18-year-old woman in his church, named Elizabeth, to marry him so that his children would have someone to care for them while he was in prison.

Zealous for God and His people she agreed to serve John, and the church. In later years she and John fell deeply in love.

Worn out by 20 years of Civil War, the British people, now that Cromwell was dead, asked Charles II to take the throne and restore stability.

Charles hated the Puritans. He was deeply committed to his father's agenda and his Anglican middle road compromise.

He ended Cromwell's religious tolerance, throwing Bunyan, and others like him, in Jail.

Because he wouldn't quit preaching, Bunyan languished in Jail for 12 years, until 1672.

While in jail his blind daughter died.

Meanwhile his congregation cared for his family. Here Bunyan describes his feelings.

“The parting with my Wife and poor children hath often been to me in this place as the pulling of the Flesh from my Bones,” he later wrote. “And that...because I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries and wants that my poor Family was like to meet with should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind Child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides; O the thoughts of the hardship I thought my Blind one might go under, would break my poor heart to pieces...Yet recalling myself, thought I, I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you. O, I saw in this condition I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his Wife and Children. Yet, thought I, I must do it, I must do it.”¹²

While in jail he wrote *Pilgrims Progress* and other books. Jailed at age 32, he was released at age 44. Four years later he was imprisoned again for another 6 months.

While he was in jail the plague devastated London for the last time. The plague was followed by a fire that burnt most of the city.

Bunyan’s persecution and suffering was replicated thousands of times during the restoration of the monarchy.

E. THE 1688 GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

Parliament finally restrained the power of the crown and passed legislation enshrining the freedoms and blessings that Puritan fathers fought and died for.

One hundred years later, our founding fathers looked back to the English Civil Wars for most of the political theory upon which the American Constitution was constructed. See *Faith and Freedom* by Hart.

¹² Ibid, Brown, pg 178,