

The Ideal of the Puritan Hearers

by J.I. Packer

The Puritans believed that England had a special calling from God to be a holy church and a holy people, and that they should bear witness to the reality and power of grace through their lives and deaths.

Duration: 52:14

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:2, Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 30:5

Topics: "Spiritual Guidance", "Reformation Theology"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the role of a man named Varsius as a guide in difficult places. Varsius is described as someone who knows and reveals dark things to sinners, and who is dedicated to his master's service. The preacher emphasizes the importance of remembering Varsius' picture as he is the authorized guide in the journey. The sermon also touches on the philosophy of England's national vocation and the belief that God is working in England to bring about a Reformation and create a holy church and people.

Transcript

Thou, the giver of life and might, wilt grant us the blessing of a right judgment, and as we study the history of thy church, help us, we pray thee, to understand thy work in history better, and thereby to learn what things in our day we ought to do. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

What we've been doing thus far is to try and tease out some of the trends which went to the making of the total Puritan outlook. And I've spoken of Tyndale and Biblicalism, I've spoken of Bradford and the quiety of repentance, I've spoken of Hooper and the troubles of Frankfurt, and the passion for pastoral care and for godly church order, and at the end of last session I was in process of speaking about John Fox, and the double legacy which he bequeathed to Puritanism, the thought of England's national vocation, and secondly, the ideal of the Puritan hero. I want to stay a little under these two heads.

You remember I ended last time simply by describing his big book. The thought of England's national vocation runs all the way through Fox's Acts and Monuments. The philosophy of the book is that after centuries in which Romanism has been obscuring the faith and suppressing gospel life, now in these last days, and Fox believed they were the last days, many of the 16th century men expected the Lord's return very soon, now in these last days, God had begun to work in England, and the record of the Reformation martyrdoms were part of the evidence of his work, moving Englishmen, summoning the nation, to shake off the remains of Rome, to consummate a work of Reformation, and to enter as a nation into a purified

pattern of life and worship, which should be a pure example of godliness for the rest of the world.

England is to be the land of a holy church and a holy people, and the Acts and Monuments end with the accession of Elizabeth, and clearly expressed expectations that under Elizabeth this destiny will be fulfilled. A book has recently been written on this particular aspect of Fox's book, William Harlow's book *The Elect Nation and Fox's Book of Martyrs*. He writes on this particular thought, The church as they conceived it, that is, those who were friends of the Reformation, appeared now as one with the nation, and for many, besides the champions of a still more perfect Reformation, the nation itself assumed something of the nature of a mystical communion of chosen spirits, a peculiar people set apart from the rest of mankind.

It was felt that there must be something special about being English, that the English were being subjected to the unusual trials now afflicting them, because they were nothing less than an elect people called to play a particular part in the designs of Providence. This conviction, which received something like official support with the official recognition of Fox's book in 1571, grew with every one of the Queen's narrow escapes from the attacks of her enemies. And there were a whole series of these, I may say, after the Pope had excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570.

And when Antichrist finally came sailing up the Channel in 1588, and the wind scattered him over the Northern Ocean, it was natural to conclude that, as Aylmer had said in 1559, God was indeed English. Well, so far, as Harlow describes it, this ideology of the special calling of England was shared by all Protestants under Elizabeth, not the Puritans only. But for the Puritans, this sense of national vocation had specific implications which not all their fellow Protestants shared.

It meant for them first that they must go on working for further church reform, because they, unlike their fellow Protestants who were content with the Elizabeth encirclement, didn't think that the doing away with the rags of Rome had gone far enough. It also meant that as time went on, and they failed, in fact, to see the reforms that they hoped that they looked for, as under Elizabeth and then under James I, the expected further reformation turned out simply not to be forthcoming, they became alarmed and they began to fear that the nation had apostatised from its divine calling and was thus likely to experience that much more severe divine judgment. And it was partly the conviction that this was so that sent many Puritan Englishmen, or that contributed towards sending many Puritan Englishmen across the Atlantic to found New England and to set up an order of things in which reformation could go all the way.

It meant for the Puritans also that they must not merely concern themselves with the outward form of church order and worship, but that they must get on with the evangelistic task. Here they were real pioneers, their fellow Protestants under Elizabeth scarcely made a move in this direction. The Puritans were the pioneers in pastoral and evangelistic concern for the English nation.

As witnessed, just one little example, a sermon preached by Edward Dearing, a young Puritan, before Queen Elizabeth in February 1570, where he does something that no one but Puritans of that time were doing, he calls attention to the pastoral disgrace, the evangelistic disgrace of the English situation and he appeals to Elizabeth, whom the act of supremacy had erected as supreme governor of the church, to do something about it. So he preaches, quote, I would first lead you to your benefices, and behold, some of them are defiled with sequestration, some robbed of their commodities. Look upon your patrons, and some are selling their benefices, some farming them, some keep them for their children, some give them to boys, some to serving men, only a very few seek after pastors.

Look upon your ministry, and there are some of one occupation, some of another, some shake bucklers, ruffians, some hawkers and hunters, some dicers and carders, some blind guides that cannot see, some dumb dogs that will not bark. And yet you, in the meanwhile, at all these whoredoms are committed, you at whose hands God will require it, you sit still and are careless, let men do what they list. It toucheth not the like your commonwealth, and therefore you are so well-contented to let all alone.

For that, you may say, is rough stuff, and I wouldn't advise you, as ever you are privileged, to preach before the President of the USA, to model your style on Edward Durant. But you can see the concern that is coming through this. Durant's concern is not now about outward forms of service and worship.

His concern is about parishes and about pastors and about local congregations and about evangelism and about spiritual guidance. These were part of the Puritan concern. They recognised that it wasn't enough to have a reformed pattern of church order if, in fact, you weren't going to have the reformed faith instilled into the hearts and lives of English men.

They're still facing that problem, you remember, that Hooper exposed in his own diocese of ignorance among the clergy and even greater ignorance among the laity. And they're pleading with the Queen to do something about it. A further consequence for the Puritans of this conviction that England had a special vocation was that the movement right up to the 1650s was kept alive, well no, this is an overstatement, not kept alive by, but spurred on by, shall I say, apocalyptic expectations.

Expectations of the Lord's return. Luther had been the first reformer to express his conviction that the Lord was coming soon. And as I said a moment ago, Fox had shared this conviction and the Puritans in general shared this conviction at least up to 1650.

You'll be interested to know that in 1642 a man published a book entitled *The Personal Reign of Christ Upon Earth*, a man named Henry Archer. You'll be interested to know that a number of more enthusiastic Puritans were quite convinced that this was actually going to come in 1655. If you say, why? Well, the only answer I can give you is the answer that they gave when they were asked.

And that answer was this. Well, they said, don't you see? The flood was 1656 BC, so don't you think the Lord's return will be 1656 AD? And if you feel that that argument lacks cogency, well, don't blame me, I didn't invent it. This was just another aspect in this Puritan sense that England had been called to a very special position in the purposes of God.

And I should have said the expectation was that when the Lord came, if he didn't come in England, at least his reign would bring special benefit for England. It would be a millennial reign. They were, we would now say, pre-millennialists, these particular chaps.

Not, I may say, all Puritans. Let me hasten to disprove you of that idea, if ever you held it. A lot of them were quite explicitly post-millennialists, especially as the 17th century wore on.

But these particular chaps were pre-millennialists, and they looked for a blessed reign of Christ which would finally bring in the kingdom of God in all its glory in England. Well, this is all that I want to say about the Puritan sense of national vocation in general. The thing I want you to remember is that if ever you feel that the Puritans, in the things they were doing between now and 1650, were more than naturally zealous, really fantastically earnest, and you wonder if perhaps this wasn't a little bit of fanaticism and getting things out of proportion, one of the things to remember is that they had behind them, carrying them on, this

tremendous sense of the will and the plan of God for England with the threat of correspondingly dreadful judgement if England didn't respond to the divine calling.

They weren't Anglo-Israelites or anything like that. But they had this strong sense of a special vocation for England. And then the other thing that Fox gave them, or rather that Fox articulated for them, it was certainly there before that Fox made it explicit, this is the ideal of the Puritan hero.

And the Puritan hero was not, as is commonly said, just a godly minister as distinct from a godly layman. It's certainly true that the Puritans had a tremendously high view of the godly minister. But the Puritan hero was not precisely that.

He was not precisely a minister. The Puritan hero was rather this, a witness, a martyr, you see? Martyr means witness, and the Puritan hero is the godly man who made a bold witness for the Lord Jesus Christ and his truth. He might be a layman, he might be a minister.

He might be learned, he might be unlearned. That wasn't the point. The point was that in faith of the Roman Antichrist and all the other manifestations of Antichrist, against sin and satan, against odds and difficulty, he bore a bold witness.

Every Reformation martyr had borne a bold witness. They faced death, they faced burning, and they bore, they witnessed a good confession right up to the end. Tyndale at the stake, praying, Lord open the king of England's eyes.

Bradford at the stake, crying, repent England and Latimer saying to Ridley as they were tied to the stake, be of good courage, Master Ridley, pray the man, by God's grace we shall light such a candle in England this day that shall never be put out. These, you know, were last words. Especially significant because they were words spoken in faith of the greatest of all the tests of a man's faith, death, violent death.

The Puritans always attached significance to the last things that men said. This was the way in which their ideal of the Christian witness, who witnessed a good confession right up to the last, worked out. Do you remember, for instance, the description of the crossing of the river in the second part of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress? Everybody's last words are recorded, have you ever dwelt on the significance of that fact? Well, goodness, let me take five minutes and read you some of these last words and I think you'll see the significance of the fact clearly enough.

Now the day drew on that Christiana must be gone. She came forth and entered the river with a beckoning farewell to those who followed her to the riverside. The last word she was heard to say here was, I come, Lord, to be with thee and to bless thee.

Then another of the pilgrims, Mr. Ready to Halt, is told that he has got to cross the river. And he does. He is the man who has always been of a discouraged spirit and so travelled unevenly on this pilgrimage on crutches the whole time.

And when he came at the brink of the river, says Bunyan, he said, now I shall have no more need of these crutches for yonder are chariots and horses for me to ride on. The last word he was heard to say was, Welcome life. So he went his way.

And then another pilgrim who had a different journey, Mr. Feeble Mind, is summoned to cross the river. And he says, as for my feeble mind, that I will leave behind me, for I have no need of that in the place

whither I go. And then he entered the river as the rest, says Bunyan, and his last words were, hold out faith and patience.

So he went over to the other side. And then there is another of the company, Mr. Despondency, who had always been a depressed Christian. And he went through the river with his daughter, much afraid.

And the last words of Mr. Despondency were, Farewell night, welcome day. And his daughter went through the river singing. So, says Bunyan, none could understand what she said.

Mr. Honest was the next pilgrim to go over. His last words were, grace reigns. So he left the world.

And then Mr. Valiant for Truth crossed the river. And his last words as he went over were, Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory? And Mr. Great Heart, he's the final pilgrim to cross. And here we are told, soft in the water.

There was a great calm at that time in the river. And when he was half way in he stood a while and talked to his companions that had waited upon him thither. And this is the kind of thing that he said, This river has been a terror to many, yea, the thoughts of it also have often frightened me.

But now, methinks, I stand easy. My foot is fixed on that on which the feet of the priests that bear the Ark of the Covenant stood while Israel went over this Jordan. The waters indeed are to the palate bitter and to the stomach cold.

Yet the thought of what I'm going to and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side doth lie at the glowing coal of my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey. I'm going to see that head that was crowned with thorns and that face that was spit upon for me.

I formerly lived by hearsay and faith. But now I go where I shall live by sight and shall be with him in whose company I delight myself. Now don't misunderstand the passage like that.

This mirrors the kind of thing in which the Puritans, to be sure, were extremely interested. The last words of the saints of God as they faced death. But what was the point of their interest? This is where the misunderstanding is so easily made.

It's not that they were just interested in religious experiences. It isn't primarily that they were interested in at this point in a man's life, in edification. What they were interested in was the witness.

The witness that he was bearing to the reality and the power of grace. Witness lies in the fact that here are men facing the king of terrors and they can talk like this and they can express a hope like this and they can express a joy like this. This is the Puritan hero.

He's the man who's faithful unto death. He bears witness to the truth of God right up to his deathbed and he's still doing it as he crosses the river. I'd like to take a real life example.

John Preston one of the leading Puritans of the Jacobean period they asked him on his deathbed whether he was afraid to die and this was his answer. No, he said, I'm not afraid to die. I shall change my faith but I shall not change my company.

And they remembered that and they treasured it up. Mr. Preston's last words. They valued it, you see, as a witness.

To be sure it was edified. To be sure it was tremendously encouraging to know as a Christian that the experience of all these saints proved that the Lord stood by men right up to the end. But the first interest is in the reality of the witness for itself.

The Puritan hero is the man who bears testimony bold, uninhibited, honest, godly, scriptural right the way through his life, right up to the end. Sinner, whose sermon I quoted just now in that situation was bearing testimony. Bearing testimony to the call of God to Elizabeth and England.

The call of God to godliness in English churches. He was doing it to the best of his ability and in the way that he thought was right. Bearing testimony, just as others were to bear testimony in all kinds of situations and finally in death.

One of the literary products of Puritanism is a species of spiritual biography. Hagiology, you might almost call it. Protestant Lives of the Saints.

Modelled in its way on Fox's biographies and the Acts of Monuments. But telling the stories of many who'd been faithful witnesses to Christ. Ministers and laymen.

And whether they'd come to a violent end or not. Many of them hadn't. And a certain Samuel Clarke.

C-L-A-R-K-E. Really, who really played the part of the poor man's John Fox at this point. He wrote no less than five books of these spiritual biographies.

By all means, read about them in Haller. Haller, Rise of Puritanism, pages 102 and following. They're very characteristic and very typical examples of the Puritan ideal of the hero.

The faithful witness for Christ. Godly, consistent, unflinching, standing fast, witnessing a good confession. It's vital to understand that this was the Puritan ideal if you would really catch the heartbeat of the movement.

So there were the strands that made up or that went to the making up of the distinctive Puritan outlook. From these seeds, Puritanism grew and, in another enumeration, we may sum up some of its distinguishing marks in the light of what we've said like this. One, it was reformed in its theology.

It was concerned about soteriology more than any other part of theology. It assimilated, as time went by, various developments in Calvinistic soteriology. We should be going into that.

But always, the heart of the matter was justification by faith in a sovereign grace context. That was Puritan doctrine. See the Westminster standards if you doubt it.

Second, it was, as a movement, frivolous in its outlook. I've illustrated this from Tyndale. I'm going to give you another illustration which I think will again show you how the Puritan heart beats regarding the Bible.

This is from the ministry of a certain John Rogers in the 1620s. Thomas Goodwin, one of the famous Puritans of Cambridge, went over to the little Essex town of Dedham to hear John Rogers preach his weekday sermon or lecture as it was called. And here's the narrative as it's told by a friend of Goodwin's, John Harris.

Mr. Rogers was on the subject of the Scripture. And in that sermon, he falls into an exhortation with the people about their neglect of the Bible. And he personates God to the people and says, Well, I've trusted

you so long with my Bible and you've slighted it.

It lies in such and such houses all covered with dust and cobwebs. You care not to listen to it. Do you use my Bible so? Well, you shall have my Bible no longer.

And he takes up the Bible from the cushion and seems as if he were going away with it and carrying it from them. But immediately he turns again and personates the people to God and falls down on his knees and cries and pleads most earnestly, Lord, whatever you do to us, take not your Bible from us. Kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods, only spare us thy Bible.

Take not away thy Bible. And then he personates God again to the people. Say you so? Well, I'll try you a while longer and here's my Bible for you.

I'll see how you'll use it, whether you'll love it more, and observe it more, and practice it more, and live more according to it. By these actions, said Thomas Goodwin, Rogers put all the congregation into so strange a posture that the place was a mere bokeh and the people generally deluged with their own tears. And he told me that he, this is Howard speaking, he told me that he himself, when he got out, had to hang a quarter of an hour on the neck of his horse weeping before he had power to mount.

So strange an impression was there upon him, strange doesn't mean queer, but unusually deep and unusually strong, so strange an impression was there upon him and generally upon the people, upon having been expostulated with for the neglect of the Bible. Well now, you see, there were pulpit dramatists in the 17th century, just as there have been pulpit dramatists since. But it isn't every bit of pulpit dramatics and pulpit dialogue between God and man that will reduce a congregation to tears.

And over and above what one must say about the power of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of a man like John Rogers, one must also say that he was touching a sensitive spot in the Puritan conscience. One thing that was always there, one thing that Puritans knew beyond any shadow of doubt, is that the Bible is the most precious thing that this word affords and whatever else they neglected, they shouldn't neglect the word. They were men of the book.

And they had to be men of the book. And just because their consciences were sensitive, they could be overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and failure and reduce to tears in the way that they were in this instance by the accusation that they hadn't taken the Bible as seriously as they should. Puritanism was Biblicist.

Utterly. The Bible must rule man's life. The Bible must rule church life.

The Bible must rule in national life. It must be the Bible ruling at every point. And then thirdly, this also has appeared, remember John Bradford, third mark of the Puritan temper a passion for personal holiness.

I've used this phrase, but tender conscience. Well, it was a favourite Puritan phrase. A tender conscience about sin.

Every man must labour to have one and to keep it tender. Another favourite phrase was universal holiness. All round holiness.

That which God called us to. That which we must seek to provide. Another favourite phrase was the phrase practical and experimental preaching and piety.

That collocation of adjectives practical and experimental that points to the Puritan concern practical because it's truth to be lived out. Experimental because it is it becomes a matter of experience. It is of course experimental in the old sense not the modern scientific sense.

Experiential is the modern equivalent for it. The Puritans were concerned that as they said again and again all truth should be reduced to practice. That we should achieve that the people of God should achieve holiness by asking themselves of everything that they learned from the book of God what's the practical bearing of this to be in life? How should it affect my conduct? How should it affect my prayer? Fourth element the ideal of heroic testimony the ideal of which we've just been speaking after Poe or Fox.

And you find this throughout Puritan history as we shall be following it through ministers accepting deprivation and expulsion from their livings rather than compromise their consciences. Puritans content to have their ears cut off for bearing an outspoken testimony against an Arminian prelacy in the Church of England in the 1630s immediately before the Anglican hierarchy was put down. Two thousand Puritans accepting ejection from their livings in 1662 again rather than compromise their consciences.

Heroic testimony as an essential part of the Christian's calling. Fifth I mentioned the godly minister let me mention him again. Part of the Puritan outlook most certainly is the ideal of a minister who is a deep expositor an experienced Christian a faith guide for the conscience a kind of ministerial ideal which you didn't find alas, in other sections of the in other sections of the Church in England which you scarcely found indeed on the continent of Europe in the lands of the Continental Reformation.

This is something distinctive to Puritanism. For a portrait of this godly minister let me read to you again from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

Do you remember how in the House of the Interpreter the Christian is shown a picture of a very grave person who had eyes lift up to heaven the best of books in his hand the law of truth written on his lips the world behind his back it stood as if it pleaded with men and a crown of gold did hang over its head and Christian looked at the picture and said what means this and the interpreter replied the man whose picture this is is one of a thousand he can beget children travel in births with children and nurse them himself when they are born and whereas thou seest him with his eyes lift up to heaven the best of books in his hand and the law of truth written on his lips it is to show thee that his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners even as also thou seest him stand as if he

pleaded with men and whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him and a crown hanging over his head that is to show thee that slighting and despising the things that are present that are present for the love that he hath to his master of service he is sure in the world that comes next to have glory for his reward now said the interpreter I showed thee this picture first because the man whose picture this is is the only man whom the lord of the place where thou art going hath authorised to be thy guide in all difficult places that thou mayest meet with in the way so bear in mind what thou hast seen lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right but their way goes down to death there's the puritan ideal of the Christian minister and it means no comment from me

six elements following the other trend of thought that Fox gave us I call this eschatological nationalism this lasted right up to the 1660s the sense that is that England had been specially called, specially privileged and now by virtue of the sins of England she called down upon herself special judgement in 1665 as you may know London was visited by the plague the bubonic plague and in 1666 the greater part of the city was flattened by fire and this on this occasion historically the last occasion the puritans one might almost

say went to town in insisting that this couldn't be understood as anything other than national judgement for the sin and the ungodliness of England and her failure to fulfil the mission to which God had called her and the final element in the puritan outlook always

and everywhere zeal for God I've spoken of Ben Jonson's mock puritan zeal of the land busy to him the zeal of the puritan to Ben Jonson I should say the zeal of the puritans was simply comic but to the puritans itself real Christianity was necessarily zealous Christianity no half measures the real thing and the whole of the real thing no compromise allowed here then is the puritan temper the things that went to make it up and the amalgam the total many sided puritan character which emerged from it this is the end of the first main hunk of this course the next main hunk is a section that again will take us five or six lectures on Elizabethan puritanism where we begin to get down to the history are there any questions now that you want to ask me about the puritan temper in general before

we get on to part two of this course all right then main heading two main heading one you remember Elizabethan puritanism the name and the thing that's what I've been elaborating thus far main heading two Elizabethan puritanism 1558 to 1603 that's Elizabeth's reign this is going to subdivide into five one the Elizabethan settlement two the controversy about ceremonies three the disciplinarian controversy that is the controversy about Presbyterianism and four the pastoral movements these I say now are the three main fields in which puritan strength was spent two unsuccessful battles were fought with regard to the ceremonies and with regard to Presbyterianism one very fruitful operation was begun on the pastoral front details as we go along and then fifthly separatism the separatist

movement which as I think I've told you was not called puritan in the 16th century but yet is normally lumped in with puritanism by later historians the separatist movement then under Elizabeth and our first subject is the Elizabethan settlement now to understand the Elizabethan settlement you have to understand Elizabeth I of England and I think I'll let her introduce herself she was, you remember, the daughter of Anne Boleyn or better, Bullen that was her real name Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife she had the reputation of being a perched young lady and it's possible therefore that it's from her mother that Elizabeth acquired some of her magisterial qualities or if not from her mother then she could certainly have acquired them from her father because Henry VIII was a bit masterful

himself let her introduce herself from the speech of Tilbury which she delivered before Drake and his boys set off against the Armada quote I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of England too the heart and stomach of a king and when she said that she was thinking undoubtedly of her father Henry VIII she was a tutor to her fingertips she was an autocrat like her father she intended to rule she was willing to have lackeys who did her bidding she was not prepared to be directed by anyone she once said I will have here but one mistress and no master she was going to be the boss her concern like that of Henry her father was to make England great her achievement in a sentence is that she did when she became queen things were

distinctly rough when she died England from being a weak nation had become a strong one as for religion her attitude was similar to that of her father she was a renaissance princess she liked elaborate rituals clerical vestments a dignified service she believed without attempting to define the load of it in the real presence of Christ in the sacrament she wanted a priesthood to be celibate possibly because she was a spinster herself or possibly just because it wasn't the Christian tradition the distinctive message of the reformation it seems went right over her head she did in fact restore Cranmer's reformed system as we shall see in a moment but it's a question whether her heart was ever in it she fitted acts of outward piety

into her life but fundamentally it was a secular life and

fundamentally her religion was an arm's length religion certainly she was indifferent to doctrine and she could never believe that there was any need of preaching in her kingdom for the furtherance of true godliness she was convinced rather that preaching would be dangerous and seditious and therefore she always tried to oppose it and keep it down Dickens in his history of the English reformation page 296 says of her, I think with truth and perception her religion, such as it was was deeply permeated by a secular idealism which related to her office as queen, you see and to England and to the well-being of the subjects committed to her charge by a very English deity she thought of herself as serving God in consulting the best interests of the nation at least cultivating the prosperity and

security sorry taking counsel for the prosperity and security of the nation and this indeed she did and did unquestionably with sincerity this was her life's work and as I say she was prospered in it and she won but as far as the church was concerned as I indicated a moment ago her concern was to use it as a political tool in the way that Augustus in the first century before Christ had used the religion of the Roman Empire as a political tool one religion binds the kingdom together therefore we'll have one religion and Elizabeth in determining the terms of her settlement therefore asked herself primarily this question which is the one religion that will secure the allegiance of most people and cause least trouble and undoubtedly that's what the line of thought that guided her in pitching

on the religion of the reformation for England there was a famous letter of Elizabeth to a certain Bishop of Ely which indicates her attitude towards even the highest offices in the church as far as she was concerned well she was queen and they were her lackeys this is the letter I could quote it verbatim I only needed to read it once and it was stuck in my memory I found it very memorable indeed Proud Prelate you know what you were before I made you what you are if you do not immediately comply with my request I will unsock you by God Elizabeth see what the Puritans were up against well now to consider her settlement first the situation in 1558 when she came to the throne remember what the history had been under Henry VIII there had been a stop, go stop, retreat type of reformation for a

time he'd not given any encouragement to reforming ideas then in 1532 he'd broken with the Pope and there'd be new liberty for those who were importing the faith of the reformation from Germany some stop to go then in 1539 the act of the six articles which made it a capital offence to deny transubstantiation that was stop and retreat with a vengeance and so it had been till his death and Edward VI succession to the English throne then it had been a green light for the reformation about 1646 I may say it had been a green light for the reformation, 1546 sorry green light for the reformation and Cranmer Henry VIII the Archbishop of Canterbury who'd had to bide his time reformation wise for many years now went straight ahead with producing a reformed prayer book a reformed confession of faith

of 42 articles which later became the Anglican 39 and a project which never unfortunately was completed before Edward's death in 1553 that was the reformation of ecclesiastical laws an elaborate project for reforming canon law and reforming the pattern of church courts and establishing a workable church discipline the documents were finished but had not been published when Edward died and they weren't published under Mary and they weren't published at all until John Fox the martyrologist dug them up and put them into print in 1571 and then of course the Tudor settlement had established itself and it wasn't possible to do anything with them except just read them as a historical curiosity but Cranmer had been after discipline in the Church of England and that's what this project was in aid

of but then in 1553 as I said Edward who had always been sickly had died of tuberculosis and Mary Queen Mary had ascended the throne she was the daughter of Henry VIII's first wife a stout Romanist she had taken the country promptly back to the Roman allegiance a cardinal Reginald Pole had come over of the papal legate to take the country over again and receive its submission Mary had married Philip II of Spain a very unpopular marriage and Mary had burned at the stake about I think it was 300 Protestants great and small and by the time that Mary died in 1558 she'd done more than anyone had done during the previous generation to make England Protestant if you make martyrs in England the result is predictable not that everybody in England was Protestant out of positive religious conviction

but the country was just not prepared to have any more truck with a church and a system that burned people for their honest belief it was then a rather secular sort of Protestantism but it was a very decided sort of Protestantism that was sweeping the country that had become the mood of the country when Elizabeth came to the throne and as she looked around her she realised that though indeed the bishops and the surviving clergy were all in the Roman allegiance, that was Mary's legacy to her the people would not stand for any more Romanism and her settlement would have to be a Protestant settlement and so she knew too, I should add here, that the Marian exiles, 800 of them, would be coming home from the centres in Switzerland to which they'd gone to take refuge under Mary and she certainly

must have a settlement that they would be content with at least if that was possible because she knew that they were vigorous people she knew that from the history of their doings the troubles that fringed her from similar events, she knew it too incidentally, from the book which one of them John Knox had published in 1557 against her predecessor Mary, bearing the stirring title A First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women now regiment there of course means rule not gaggle it wasn't an attack on the female sex, it was simply a supposedly scriptural argument to prove that a woman ought not to occupy the throne in a godly kingdom not in sex, that the majority of the Marian exiles approved of the book but Knox in the heat of his spirit had published it in the hope

that it would unseat Mary Queen of England the sooner well, Elizabeth always held it against him, she never allowed him to enter England she regarded him as a seditious person because of the arguments that he conducted in this book and you can see her point of view I'm only telling you this in order to give evidence to my assertion that she knew that the Marian exiles were pretty tough and pretty lively and it just wouldn't be worth her while not to play ball with them now, this leads us up to a paragraph which I'll have to forego until next time, we'll have to leave it there this was a situation then in which Elizabeth had to devise her religious settlement it was taken for granted of course that it would be the Queen, the Queen in Parliament, the civil authority who devised the

religious settlement the only question is what sort of settlement was it going to be? well if you come back at this time tomorrow you'll find out thank you

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