

A DISTINCTIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE-STYLE

Or

A survey of the distinctive Christian life-style  
of the seventeenth century Puritans, in England  
and New England, with particular reference to  
Messrs. Richard Baxter and John Bunyan, and  
its relevance today.

John Burgess  
May 1980

It has been said that Christianity is not just a religion, or a philosophy, or a way of life, but it is all of these things. The Believer cannot just be a Sunday Christian, as he believes that his faith in Christ must permeate all of his thoughts, words and actions; Indeed the whole of his life. The belief that the Christian no longer lives to himself, as the 'carnal man' does, but that he lives to Christ, and that Christ lives in him, directing his every movement, through the Holy Spirit, is not just an ideal, but the essence of the faith. It is however an ideal, as history has shown that every attempt to perfect the doctrines has led to failure.

Because it is an essence of the faith, there have been attempts to show that the Christian faith is equivalent to the Christian life, and that a Christian must live out his faith daily, such that he is seen to have a particular life-style. The first attempt at this was perhaps in the early church in Jerusalem, where it is intimated in the book of Acts<sup>1</sup>, that the Apostolic church tried to live in a community, or commune manner. It was deemed to have been a failure. Throughout history other attempts have been made, such that today there are those Christians who have tried, and apparently succeeded in setting up a Christian type commune life-style<sup>2</sup>. Others have considered that the true Christian community is one of the Spirit, and is often associated, and dismissed as 'Charismatic'. Yet others today have equated naturalism', back to nature, health foods and the like, as the proper Christian example of the way to live<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2 v 44f., 4 v 32 - 35

<sup>2</sup> Harper, M 'A new way of living' & Sider, H J 'Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger'

<sup>3</sup> See The report in Reform, May 1980 on the aesthetic habits of Johanneson-berg & Bockmuhl, K (tr. Kaye, B N) 'Conservation and lifestyle' (1977)

But perhaps the greatest experiment of all time to determine a distinctive life-style was that of 17th century England and New England in what is generally known as 'Puritanism'. Johnson writes<sup>4</sup>:

'Puritanism was not only a religious creed, it was a philosophy and a metaphysic; it was an organization of man's whole life, emotional and intellectual, to a degree which has not been sustained by any denomination stemming from it'

and Haller writes in assessing the content and rise of Puritanism that although it stemmed from the shock of the disappointment that Elizabeth did not reform the church, it was not simply a political movement, or a movement to reform the church government, but 'it was a new way of life'<sup>5</sup>.

Although the experiment was ultimately defeated, due to its political role, the lack of a suitable leader, and diversity within its ranks<sup>6</sup>, it cannot really be said that the experiment was a failure. Although the Puritan Commonwealth, lasted only for a few years, its effects have penetrated life throughout the succeeding centuries to the present day. De Klerk, speaking of the height of Puritanism in England, the time of the Commonwealth, says<sup>7</sup>:

'Though the Commonwealth quickly followed [the death of Cromwell] its implications were to reverberate through many centuries and in many lands'

and of Puritanism itself:

'the development of Puritanism out of the English Calvinistic ethic became one of the prime forces in all Western History'

---

<sup>4</sup> Miller, P and Johnson, T H 'The Puritans' p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Haller, W 'The rise of Puritanism' p.18.

<sup>6</sup> see Cragg, G H 'The Collapse of Militant Puritanism' in 'Essays in Modern English church History in memory of Norman Sykes' Ed. G V Bennell & J D Walsh

<sup>7</sup> de Klerk, W A 'The Puritans in Africa' p.15k-S & p.149.

Similarly Watts speaking of the dissenters of the 16th and 17th century, who to a large extent can be equated with the Puritans, writes<sup>8</sup>:

'But though dissent has rarely occupied the centre of the national stage, it has played a most important supporting role in the development of the English, and still more of the Welsh, nations'

It is claimed, then, by many scholars, that although the Puritan Commonwealth was only an interlude in British history, it had far reaching effects, and it was largely the life and belief of these times that helped make England and Britain unique in the succeeding centuries. The Puritan Commonwealth helped establish the right of every Englishman to a freedom of religion, and a tolerance (all be it a limited tolerance in the 17th century) of the belief of others. Hence even within the Puritan understanding of the faith and Christian life, there was a great diversity. Because of this diversity it is not possible to determine an absolute Puritan doctrine of the Christian life. Although it is possible to draw general conclusions it is also worthwhile to look at the doctrines of certain renowned Puritan figures of the 17th century.

it is therefore proposed in this essay, along with a general description of the Puritan understanding of the Christian life, to look at two Puritans of somewhat diverging beliefs. Richard Baxter, although a 'non-conformist' tried to hold the church together in a unity, and although claiming to be neither a Presbyterian or an 'anglican' swayed towards the conformist attitude. John Bunyan on the other hand, who has much to say, pictorially, about the Christian life, was a separatist, and a Baptist.

---

<sup>8</sup> Watts, N H 'The Dissenters' p.3.

These great Puritans, are still read today, by a large section of the Christian church, and are therefore seen to have a message for the present day. Hence by looking at these twol7th century preachers, in conjunction with the general understanding of the Puritans, about the Christian way of life, we will be able to determine what relevance their understandings have for the present day Christian to determine a distinctive Christian lifestyle.

The Puritan tradition, in England, was initiated in Tudor times, and Knappen puts forward his thesis well in his 'Tudor Puritanism'. He claims<sup>9</sup> that they understood the cardinal doctrine of 'Justification by faith' as the essence of Protestantism. Because they grew out of the Reformation movement as a whole, and from its beginnings, it cannot be said that any one person, or influence, produced the Puritans. They are a product of the English Reformation. And yet, it would be totally misguided to claim that there was no particular movement that influenced them,

Indeed because of their great diversity, there were a number of significant influences on the early, and later Puritans. Before 1614 Haller claims<sup>10</sup> there was nobody in England comparable to John Knox in Scotland, or John Calvin in Geneva. They had developed their own understanding of Christian Doctrine, from the study of the Bible alone, such that Haller<sup>11</sup> claims that theologically they were Augustinizers or Paulines. And yet it would be foolishness to deny the influence that the Reformation in Switzerland and particularly John Calvin in Geneva had upon the Puritans in England. He was not the only influence, and although many of the Puritan Doctrines were similar to Calvinistic doctrines, it is not possible to equate Puritanism with Calvinism, They generally accepted the theology of Calvin particularly that on predestination, but not because they followed him, or the reformation in Geneva, but because they too had discovered a theology similar to Calvin<sup>12</sup>. They were not narrow Calvinists, but 'Calvinists of a Sort'<sup>13</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup> Hailer op.cit. p.8.

<sup>10</sup> ibid p.85.

<sup>11</sup> ibid p.66.

<sup>12</sup> Miller and Johnson op.cit. p.56.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Therefore because of the influence of Calvin, and the similarities of their doctrines and theology, it will be worthwhile to make a slight divergence to look at the relevant portions of Calvin's theology as contained in his Institutes of the Christian Religion<sup>14</sup>.

In his 'Institutes' Calvin devotes approximately five chapters of book three, to discussing the Christian life. These are chapters: 6 'The life of the Christian man; and first by what arguments Scripture urges it' ; 7 'The Sum of the Christian life the denial of ourselves'; 10 'How we must use the present life and its helps'; 14 'The beginning of Justification and its continual progress; and 19 'Christian freedom'.

Chapter six, opens with the way that Calvin intends to attack the problem, he writes:

'It will be profitable to assemble from various passages of Scripture a pattern for the conduct of life in order that those who heartily repent may not err in their zeal'<sup>15</sup>

and

'I do not intend to develop, here, the instruction in living that I am now about to offer to the point of describing individual virtues at length.... To show the godly man how he may be directed to a rightly ordered life, and briefly to set down some universal rule with which to determine his duties - this will be quite enough for me'<sup>16</sup>

In other words Calvin is only giving a guide to the Christian life and is not producing a law.

---

<sup>14</sup> Library of Christian classics edition. Ed. J T McNeil

<sup>15</sup> ibid vol. I p.684.

<sup>16</sup> ibid p.685.

There are two motives for living the Christian life, The love of righteousness must be instilled and established in our hearts, and a rule is to be set that 'does not let us wander about in our zeal for righteousness'<sup>17</sup>, and these enable us to 'be holy as God is holy' (Lev. 19 v 2, I Pet. 1 v 15-16). The member of God's people is made holy and righteous by cleaving to God so that he lives according to God's will.

The pattern of the holy life is Christ. He is the perfect son of God and we too as sons must show we are sons by living in the example of Christ.

'For we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition that our life expresses Christ, the bond of our adoption'<sup>18</sup>

So Calvin sees that the Christian life is conditional. But it is not just blindly acting out a life that is a resemblance of Christ's. We must be totally pure. It is a matter of the right understanding and a 'pure heart' as well as action. For as we are destined for heavenly incorruption, we ought to keep ourselves pure until the Day of the Lord<sup>19</sup>. Hence the Christian life is not just an expression of the life of Christ, it is also a preparation for the heavenly life.

In this context, life is seen as a pilgrimage to heaven (Lev. 25 v 23, I Pet. 2 v 11, Heb. 11 v 8-100)<sup>20</sup>. And, on this pilgrimage, we are to use all of God's gifts to equip us, but they must be used in the correct manner, so that there is neither abstinence or lust. Hence the 'rule' for the new life in Christ is moderation coupled with self-denial (an imitation of Christ). In fact Calvin devotes two chapters to self-denial, as the basis of the

---

<sup>17</sup> ibid p.686.

<sup>18</sup> ibid p.687.

<sup>19</sup> ibid p.687.

<sup>20</sup> ibid p.719.



Christian life. He starts his explanation by declaring that the purpose of this life is to advance the glory of God, and not to seek for human glory<sup>21</sup>. We need to live in humility, and to constantly examine ourselves. We should not be proud, but should remember that everything we have is a gift and blessing from God. Our possessions are not for our own use but for God and our neighbour. He writes<sup>22</sup>:

'We are the stewards of everything God has conferred on us by which we are able to help our neighbour, and are required to render account of our stewardship. Moreover, the only right stewardship is that which is tested by the rule of love'.

Therefore as our stewardship is an essential part of the Christian life, we should be moderate in all things, being sober, righteous and godly, where Calvin interprets soberness as chastity, temperance, pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patience in poverty<sup>23</sup>.

But this life of self denial and moderation, will produce hardship and an 'unquiet life'. It will be a time of testing where, quoting Phil. 3 v 10-11, 'We come to know the sharing of his [Christ's] sufferings and at the same time grasp the power of his resurrection'. This testing is a fatherly chastisement to fit us for the heavenly life<sup>24</sup>.

Hence the works that we do are to prepare us for heaven, not for salvation. We already have salvation by faith, and these works strengthen our faith and are the fruits of the 'call'<sup>25</sup>. They are gifts from God, to be used to his glory. And yet these good works are always 'splattered with

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid p.690

<sup>22</sup> Ibid p.695. & p.782. , where he quotes Chrysostom's 'Homilies on Philemon ii 4' 'all our belongings have the same status as the possessions of slaves, which by right belong to their master himself'.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid p.692.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid p.706.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid p.784-5.

uncleaness'<sup>26</sup>, but through God's mercy, and, not of our own merit, they are accounted as righteous<sup>27</sup>.

And yet for all this, whatever necessity there is to live a pure, holy, life, with good works, there is freedom in the Christian life. We are not bound by the Law, but our freedom allows us to rise above the Law. Freedom is not therefore a rejection of the Law and an abuse of gifts<sup>28</sup> but a freedom to be better than the Law, and a freedom to use God's gifts properly. We have the freedom not to eat meat, so that our 'weaker brethren' will not be offended, or the freedom to eat meat so that we can show our freedom before men<sup>29</sup>. Hence the freedom of the Christian life is to be able to be above the law, and in love, make our actions suit the situation. Our actions must not be seen to break the Law, but to be above the Law.

Thus then, a summary, all to brief, of the understanding of the Christian life, as found in Calvin's 'Institutes'.

---

<sup>26</sup> ibid p.792.

<sup>27</sup> ibid p.811.

<sup>28</sup> ibid p.841.

<sup>29</sup> ibid p.842.

And so to move from the 'Calvinistic' understanding of the Christian life, to the Puritans understanding. As was stated earlier, the Puritan's theology had much in common with Calvin's theology, but there were other influences as well. These perhaps can be regarded as minor, and will be dealt with as they arise later in the essay.

Calvin's theology, however, was only an authority in as much that it expounded Scripture in accordance with the Puritans expositions. Calvin's 'Institutes' or any other theology, was not the authority for the Puritan, as the only authority that they recognized was the Bible. They rejected any authority attributed to tradition, although they were greatly influenced by the work of the early fathers, and traditional methods of interpretation. Indeed they were also influenced by the schoolmen<sup>30</sup>, and the medieval church doctrines, and thinking, more than perhaps they would admit, because like all other sections of the church and population of England, the Puritans were 'children of their time' and therefore influenced by their times, their culture and their forefathers. Hence to a large extent the Puritan thinking and understanding was that of the seventeenth century<sup>31</sup>.

To them the sole authority was the Bible. To the early 'puritans' such as William Tyndale<sup>32</sup> the Bible had only one sense, the literal sense, It was easy to interpret using its own authority and there was only one correct exegesis. This 'correct' exegesis was easily and intuitively recognized. However the later Puritans realized that Bibles were translations, and with Luther were aware that Scripture could be a 'wax nose'<sup>33</sup>.

---

<sup>30</sup> Miller and Johnson op.cit. p.26.

<sup>31</sup> ibid p.4.

<sup>32</sup> see Knappen, N N 'Tudor Puritanism' p.356f.

<sup>33</sup> ibid p.365.

With reference to Rev. 22 v 18, they held that 'Traditions were beggerly inventions of men'<sup>34</sup> and held to the Doctrine of Unique and complete authority of the Bible. The Bible is divine, even though it could not be proved. Rather it is a statement of fact, and as such has to be a matter of faith. What was stated in the Bible was to be adhered to, and what was not found therein was to be dismissed. The Bible was, then, the source of all actions and understandings, for in it God declared his intention to men. Johnson sums up the strict Puritan attitude to the Bible<sup>35</sup>:

'The Puritan thought the Bible, the revealed word of God, was the word of God from one end to the other, a complete body of laws, an absolute code in everything it touched upon'

he adds

'The anglican thought this a rigid, doctrinaire, and utterly unjustifiable extension of the authority of Scripture'

and to some extent this is 'fair comment'. And yet as 'the revealed Word of God', the Bible must contain sufficient guidelines for all our daily needs, however minor they are. Richard Hooker's understanding<sup>36</sup> that the Bible is the revealed word of God only in the broad principles of the Christian religion, and that in minor matters God did not set up rules for men, but left it to their discretion, is not in line with the general Puritan understanding of the Doctrine of unique and complete authority of the Bible, and relied on a revealed theology for daily life.

The dogmatic approach to Scripture, which Knappen claims was both the strength and weakness of the Puritan cause<sup>37</sup>, ultimately helping its defeat,

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid p.354

<sup>35</sup> Miller and Johnson op.cit. p.43.

<sup>36</sup> Hooker, H 'Of the Laws of Eccl. Polity' Book II chap. VIII

<sup>37</sup> Knappen op.cit. p.365.

however was not always borne out in practise. Because of the influences from various areas, such as humanism<sup>38</sup>, the church fathers, and all types of knowledge<sup>39</sup>, including economics and science, were for the glory of God, they could not be ignored. So they developed along side their doctrine of the Bible, a revealed theology and religion. God's intervention was not confined to the Biblical times, but could be found in any age. Indeed 'the truth' can be discovered in every age and in every thing, because God created all things, and the purpose of all things is for the glory of God.

'The truth can be discovered in nature, poetry, right reason, and the counsel of nations. He [the Puritan] does not deny that these things are emanations of God's wisdom and that for them men may gain all manner of valuable instruction'<sup>40</sup>

Other 'authorities' for the Puritan can be found in Puritan works such as 'the Book of Discipline' (1583)<sup>41</sup>, often known as the textbook of Puritanism, and writings by Richard Rodgers 'A daily rule of life', and the many works of Richard Baxter. But perhaps the greatest written contribution to the propagation of the Puritan doctrines, were the transcripts of sermons, tracts, 'confessions' and 'diaries'. Perhaps this was heightened in the work of Milton. Likewise great stress was laid upon the lives of the saints and the martyrs, and of course the lives of the preachers. The preachers were not just expected to preach sermons, but to live sermons as well. But in this context perhaps the most famous works are the graphic 'maps' of the Christian life, the ideal life, based on the writers own experiences, as found in John Bunyan.

---

<sup>38</sup> with reference to the humanism of the Puritans of New England – Miller and Johnson p.21.

<sup>39</sup> Miller and Johnson op.cit. p.10.

<sup>40</sup> ibid p.51.

<sup>41</sup> Thus the Latin edition. Published in 1644 in English.

Hence bearing all this in mind, it is perhaps fair to say, that the basis of the theology and doctrines of the Puritans, was firstly the Bible, and secondly the experience of the lives of the church Fathers, and more important the 'revealed knowledge' Of their own, and their contemporaries experiences of life. Their 'doctrine' of the Christian way of life, particularly as seen in contemporary writings, which reflect the biography of the writer. Theology changes, throughout one's life from an ideal, to a practical, moulded by the experience of life. Hence, the importance of the lives of saints, martyrs and, preachers to the Puritans.

The writings of Richard Barter, and John Bunyan, reflect both the Scriptural authority and the experience of life, that is so revered by the Puritans. The works of Richard Baxter, such as 'the Reformed Pastor' are still recommended reading today, for the Ordinand, On one of the modern editions of this book<sup>42</sup>, is written:

'Today, Baxter's principles, drawn from Scripture, and re-applied in terms of modern circumstances, will provide both ministers and other Christians with challenge, direction and help'.

Likewise I would recommend to any Christian, Barter's posthumous work 'What we must do to be saved'<sup>43</sup> as an enlightening work for any 'membership' or 'confirmation' class.

Similarly Bunyan's famous book 'Pilgrim's Progress, is widely circulated today, sadly often as a children's book, and sadly too, without the second

---

<sup>42</sup> Edited by N Brown, Puritan Paperbacks (the Banner of Truth Trust) (1974)

<sup>43</sup> Difficult to procure; the writer used a 1868 private edition. Ed. by A B Grosart

part; and any reader of 'Grace abounding to the chief of sinners'<sup>44</sup> cannot be but impressed.

---

<sup>44</sup> Such as the Everyman edition, combined with 'the life and death of Mr Badman', Ed. Harrison, G B Dent. (1928)

John Bunyan was born at Horrowden in Bedfordshire, which was a Puritan stronghold<sup>45</sup> in 1628, to Margaret and Thomas Bunyan. His father was a Brazier or Tinker and was sufficiently prosperous to draw up a will. Although in later life he complained of his poverty as a child, this was not 'abject poverty', and his father's wealth was sufficient to give him an education, based mainly on the Bible and such books as Foxes' book of Martyrs<sup>46</sup>.

During the Civil war he enlisted or more likely was 'imprestred' into the Army, although it is believed that he saw no action<sup>47</sup>, Undoubtedly while serving the New Model Army he would have been subject to various Spiritual pressures. Furlong writes<sup>48</sup>:

'Many Army chaplains were using their position to preach revolutionary attitudes. The common soldiers also took up preaching, with the same confidence as the itinerant mechanic preachers'.

It is after being demobbed from the Army, having married, and living in poverty, that he unconsciously begins to determine a means for his salvation<sup>49</sup>. At his lowest point he comes into contact with Mr. Gifford, the minister of the independent congregation at Bedford<sup>50</sup>. It was in 1653 that he first attended the Bedford Meeting being Baptised in the River Ouse by Gifford. He began to preach in 1656, and in 1660, this was the cause of his first imprisonment for his beliefs in Bedford Gaol, where there were 'no fireplaces and the prisoners slept on straw. Epidemics of deadly fever broke out'<sup>51</sup>.

---

<sup>45</sup> Ogg, D 'England in the Reign of Charles II' Vol.1 p.38 (1934)

<sup>46</sup> Furlong, N 'Puritan's Progress' a study of John Bunyan (1975) p.49.

<sup>47</sup> Bunyan, J 'Grace abounding' (p.13)

<sup>48</sup> Furlong op.cit. p.52.

<sup>49</sup> ibid p.57.

<sup>50</sup> ibid p.63.

<sup>51</sup> Talon, H John Bunyan. The Man and His works (1951) p.9.



Bunyan then led a life that was perhaps typical of many of the Puritans of his day, He had been involved in the fight for the Commonwealth, had seen the 'height' of Puritanism under Cromwell, and then was subject to the tyranny of the restoration. His life is reflected in his writings, and the life of the times can be seen to influence his work. 'The Holy War' (1682) being one of his later works, can easily be read as an allegory of the times.

But for our purpose, of looking at his understanding of the Christian life, perhaps the three books 'pilgrim's Progress', 'Grace abounding', and 'The life and death of Mr Badman' are the most important.

It is almost superfluous to say that Bunyan understood the Christian life to be a pilgrimage to the 'Holy City'. A life of constant battle and warfare with the chief object of attaining the goal of the New Jerusalem. Greaves Writes<sup>52</sup>:

'The Christian life was in reality a soteriological journey which commenced with the trek from the city of Destruction and continued through the wicket gate to the Palace Beautiful and ultimately to the final but glorious place of eternal dwelling with God'.

The first part of 'Pilgrim's Progress' sees this pilgrimage as one of personal warfare, and struggles whereas the second part, describes, much more, its joy.

---

<sup>52</sup> Greaves, R L John Bunyan (1969) p.49.

And the pilgrimage starts with the Pilgrim's call. This is a definite dynamic call, and obviously reflects Bunyan's own call, and it comes after a time of deliberation and distress. Porter writes<sup>53</sup>:

'the Christian life is an expression of dynamic will. One cannot drift into it, The Spiritual Nan is not a mere outgrowth of the natural man'.

This call involved election, calling, faith, repentance, justification, forgiveness, sanctification and perseverance. Bunyan was a Calvinist, and believed in the doctrine of the Elect, who were given faith to believe, while those not elected were left 'in their sins to perish by God's Judgement'. Man only had free will to choose sin, but although he could not will Salvation, he could resist the will of God, Hence the call <sup>54</sup>could be resisted, but with this he held that 'calling' was 'irresistible' grace, because man could do nothing in himself towards his salvation.

But once the Pilgrim had been called he had to respond, and this was principally through the 'pilgrim's perseverance'. Faith meant action, and it was the 'all embracing principle or source of the Christian life from its inception to its consummation'. It was determined not through an historical approach but through a result of 'the cooperation of the Spirit with the word', and this faith will be initiated upon the person who has a knowledge of Christ. This is the Grace of God, which is 'infused' into the justified sinner.

---

<sup>53</sup> Porter, A 'The Inside of Bunyan's dream, the Pilgrim's progress for the man of Today' (1927) p.61.

<sup>54</sup> Greaves op.cit. p.60.

After faith comes repentance, but before a person can repent, he has to understand what sin is, and have a sense of sin. His book about Mr. Badman relates not his own life, but that of his contemporaries<sup>55</sup>:

'All the things that here I discourse of, have been acted upon the stage of this world, even many times before mine eyes'.

It describes the greatest sinner, and includes all the possible combination of sins such that Mr. Badman is described as 'one massy body of sins'<sup>56</sup>. Mr. Badman of course did not have a sense of his sin. This is Christian's problem, he has a great burden of sin which is only relieved once he has passed through the wicket gate (which incidentally is not opened by Christian but by 'Good Will'), and arrives at the place:

'somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre'<sup>57</sup>

Repentance comes after the sense of sin, and is a continuous life long act:

'True repentance, or the right going up these turning stairs, is called repentance to salvation; for true repentance stopeth not at the reception of grace, for that is but a going up these stairs to the middle chamber... '<sup>58</sup>

However, the fruits of repentance include confession, hatred of sin, amendment of one's life, etc. This is the first step of a genuine profession of faith.

---

<sup>55</sup> Bunyan, J 'The life and death of Mr. Badman' - preface p.139.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> Bunyan, J 'Pilgrim's Progress' Ed. H E Lewic, 'Everyman edition (Dent.) 1907' p.42

<sup>58</sup> Bunyan, J 'Solomon's temple spiritualized' 1688 p.86.

Then comes justification, pronouncing the sinner just and acquitting him. Justification is by faith, not works. Works, for Bunyan, have no place in the acquiring of salvation, but are important in response of faith.

Sanctification is consequent with the call, and is the operation of the Holy Spirit within us. This sanctification effects the whole person, so that sin cannot 'slide in' and be uncontrollable. Likewise, as this is the work of the Holy Spirit, so are all good works. The Spirit 'principles us in all the Powers of our souls, with that which is Righteousness in the habit and nature of it'<sup>59</sup>, also the believer 'was qualified with Principles not natural but Spirituall<sup>60</sup>, i.e. faith, hope and love, which worked in him to Purify him. Hence Justification produces a 'Holy life'.

This holy life was only possible through the intercessing work of Jesus Christ, and it needed perseverance. The elect will persevere and not fall into sin, and yet Bunyan realized that there were some elect who sinned, and concluded that they would be restored to salvation on the last day, which is akin to the year of the Jubilee<sup>61</sup>. This Holy life then was a sign of the election and a sign of justification and sanctification. As sin could not rule, then there could be no licentiousness in the elect's life, rather the life had to full of 'good works'.

This then produced what is generally known as the 'Covenant Theology' of the puritans. It was not a covenant between God and Man, but between God and his Word<sup>62</sup>, but it 'specified precisely what conditions were required

---

<sup>59</sup> Bunyan, J 'The Desire of the Righteous Granted'. First published in 'The works of That Eminent Servant of Christ, Mr John Bunyan', 1692,p.234.

<sup>60</sup> Bunyan, J 'A Defence of the Doctrine of Tustification, by Faith'1672 p.8.

<sup>61</sup> Greaves op.cit. p.92.

<sup>62</sup> ibid p.103.

... in order for man to be accepted by God'<sup>63</sup>. An appeal to Mark 16 v 16, and John 6 v 37, can be made for the understanding of a covenant. Bunyan expounded the Covenant Theology in 'The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded' stating<sup>64</sup>:

'First, what it is, that is covenanted for.  
Secondly, the conditions, upon which the persons, who are concerned in it do agree,  
Thirdly, if the conditions on both sides be not according to the agreement fulfilled then the covenant standeth not, but is made void',

The first covenant was the covenant of works, that is the Law, Nobody can complete the Law, and it only leads to despair, for those who try. As Christian approaches the Hill (Mount Sinai) 'his burden now seemed heavier to him than while he was in his way'<sup>65</sup>. But there is a new covenant, the covenant of Grace, which is really detailed in 'Pilgrim's Progress'. And it is God who admits the sinner to this covenant.

'He that will enter in must first without..  
Stand knocking at the Gate, nor need he doubt  
That is a KNOCKER but to enter in;  
For God can love him and forgive his sin'<sup>66</sup>.

Any conditions that were needed to fulfil the covenant, were completed by Christ, hence the covenant is between God and his Word, and. man is brought into the covenant if he believes. As Bunyan attributed no significance to Baptism and rejected Paedobaptism, he was not troubled with baptized persons (who are part of the covenant if Baptism is seen as the sign of the covenant) straying from the Pilgrim way. Rather once the person was admitted to the covenant as Christian was when he went through the wicket

---

<sup>63</sup> ibid p.97.

<sup>64</sup> p.143.

<sup>65</sup> Bunyan, J 'Pilgrim's Progress' op.cit. p.21.

<sup>66</sup> ibid p,27.

gate and arrived at the cross was certain of his eternal destiny, however troubled his temporal journey might be.

Now under grace the Christian had nothing to do with the Law, because he does not need to keep it, to have salvation. Yet while grace was in opposition to the Law, it was not diagrammatically opposite<sup>67</sup>. The new covenant was a new law, but a Spiritual law. The old law had a new, but restricted place in the new covenant. It was no longer the judge and saviour, but a 'rule of life' - a guideline for the Pilgrim. Bunyan wrote<sup>68</sup>:

'The Doctrine of the new Covenant doth call for holiness1 engage to holiness, and maketh the children of the Covenant to take pleasure therein. Let no man therefore conclude ... that the Doctrine of the Gospel is a licentious Doctrine'.

And this undoubtedly is the key to the understanding of the Puritan life. We have salvation by faith alone, but we must respond to that gift of faith, by living a holy life under the guidance of the Law.

But living under the guidance of the law, means more than just living a righteous life, it is a fruitful life as well. As justification by faith does not lead to licentiousness, neither does it lead to irresponsibility. Rather it necessitates the doing of good works, And as these good works are through the Holy Spirit, then the greater service or activity that God requires of a person, then the greater the grace bestowed.

And yet Bunyan sees that good works have a fuller purpose. By doing good works, the Christian will have 'more than salvation'. Based upon Paul's understanding of good works<sup>69</sup>, Bunyan wrote<sup>70</sup>:

---

<sup>67</sup> Greaves op.cit. p.113.

<sup>68</sup> Bunyan, J 'The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded' 1659 p.345.

<sup>69</sup> I Corinthians 3 v 12-15

'I tell thee, Christian, be but rich in good works, and thou shalt have more than salvation thy salvation thou hast freely by grace through Christ, without works, but now being justified and saved ... thou shalt be rewarded for every work that pleases God'

And more, the fruits of ones salvation are good works, so that if the Christian 'does not have to justify himself before God, the converted Christian must justify himself before men by his works'<sup>71</sup>.

But the Christian life is not simply an individualistic striving to show faith in works. It involves other people, and can be a corporate life. The two important communities for the Puritan are the family and the church. These are reflected principally in the second part of 'Pilgrim's Progress'.

If we are to look at Christian, -we see that he is harsh, but does not lack sensitivity. He loves his family, but finds that his 'burden' is too great, and that he must go his pilgrim way. God, and Salvation come before his family, Yet, this is sad to him for he is concerned for his family, and dare not think about them as this will produce despair and pride and 'yet his love of God by no means kills his love of people'<sup>72</sup>.

The father is the head of the family, and an example to the family. It is Christian who has the faith which is 'of the heart', and it is only later, when Christiana has meditated upon her husband's conduct and words that she could follow him. The father is also the 'protector' of the family being a 'fearless knight'<sup>73</sup> ready to do battle with any obstacle, such as lions and giants, for the sake of his faith, And yet there was much love, and while

---

<sup>70</sup> Bunyan, J 'Christian Behaviour' 1663, p.572 in 'Works' Ed. George Offer 1862.

<sup>71</sup> ibid p.549.

<sup>72</sup> Talon op.cit. p.196.

<sup>73</sup> ibid p.191.

Christian is normally depicted as the 'knight' he is also 'Great heart'. Indeed, in the Bedfordshire archives, particularly of the time of persecutions, there was a love, within the families, for brothers and sisters in their distress. There is shown also that while there was devotion, there was also discipline'?<sup>74</sup>.

But turning to the family as a whole, while the father is the head, example and the disciplinarian, the mother is the key to the home and the 'sanctuary of Peace'. Family life was not so dull as it is so often painted, for there was no scorn for the good things of the world. There was a love of pleasure, and this is borne out in the passage when Christiana and her children reach the Palace Beautiful. Here they could enjoy good food<sup>75</sup> and have enjoyment of dancing and music'?<sup>76</sup>. The concept of hospitality is a major one in the Puritan family, both here at the Palace Beautiful, and in the Inn of Gaius, the family receives good hospitality. Although it is late when the family arrives at the inn. Gaius says:

'It is late, so we cannot conveniently go out to seek for food; but such as we have you shall be welcome to, if that will content',<sup>77</sup>

and

'Come, my good friends, you are welcome to me, and I am glad that I have house to entertain you',<sup>78</sup>

Yet enjoyment and pleasure was not to lead to idleness. In the tale of Mercy and Mr. Brisk, when Mr. Brisk came to 'court' Mercy he always found

---

<sup>74</sup> ibid p.194.

<sup>75</sup> Bunyan, J 'Pilgrim's Progress' p.26k & p.315-6.

<sup>76</sup> ibid p.265.

<sup>77</sup> ibid p.311.

<sup>78</sup> ibid p.332.



her busy, and yet for all her work, she earnt nothing, but worked for the poor and needy. This was too much for Mr. Brisk who decided that

'Mercy was a pretty lass, but troubled with ill conditions',<sup>79</sup>

And those 'ill conditions' were:

'Her mind also was, to be busying of herself in doing; for when she had nothing to do for herself, she would be making of hose and garments for others, and would bestow them upon them that had need',<sup>80</sup>.

One further point is brought out in the saga of the Palace Beautiful, and that is the responsibility of the father, and in his absence the mother to teach the children of the Christian faith. Prudence concludes, after examining James, Joseph, Samuel and Matthew, that Christiana is 'to be commended for thus bringing up your children',<sup>81</sup>, but even so instructs the boys that they have still much to learn.

The family then is an important unit in the Puritan life, as understood by Bunyan, and his interpretation reflects the situation in Bedfordshire. But perhaps it need only be seen as a microcosm of the family of the church.

Once elected the Christian became part of the church, the 'stately Palace' - the Palace Beautiful, the Universal church. But also the Christian was to be a member of the local church, and he was admitted to this by the discretion of the local church. The Porter of the Palace says to Christian<sup>82</sup>:

---

<sup>79</sup> ibid p.272.

<sup>80</sup> ibid p.271.

<sup>81</sup> ibid p.270.

<sup>82</sup> ibid p.53-4.

'Well, I will call out one of the virgins of this place, who will, if she likes your talk, bring you in to the rest of the family, according to the rules of the house',

And Discretion comes out and:

'Then she asked him whence he was, and wither he was going; and he told her. She asked him also how he got into the way; and he told her. Then she asked him what he had seen and met with in the way; and he told her. And last she asked his name; so he said, It is Christian, and I have so much the more a desire to lodge here to-night, because, by what I perceive, this place was built by the Lord of the hill, for the relief and security of pilgrims',

and having discussed with Prudence, Piety and Charity, they welcomed him to the Palace. It is noteworthy however that Christiana is admitted to the Palace, not on her own confession, as was Christian, but because she is Christian's wife. It is by the discretion of the church, who had to determine whether a person had received grace, that a person is admitted, and not whether he had been baptized or not. The church is holy and all who are part of the church, must be saints, i.e. sanctified.

We also see from the quotation, Bunyan's understanding of the purpose of the church 'for the relief and security of Pilgrims'. The church was a fellowship, of encouragement, and learning for the Christian. It was a family gathered together to live a life of holiness. It was a means of grace, only in that it stimulated growth in grace.

In short then to Bunyan, the Christian life depended upon the call and Grace of God. His Grace, calls, sanctifies and justifies, us. Those who receive grace, are expected to live holy fruitful lives, necessitating the doing of good works. Yet this life is not one of ease, it is a continual battle and striving after a growth in faith, and holiness, in servitude. Yet it is not a life that must be lived, by human strength alone. The strength is given through God's grace, and those that have greater trials

and activities will have a greater amount of grace bestowed<sup>83</sup>. The 'root' grace is faith, but others are love, hope, patience, endurance etc. With this life of striving, however, there is enjoyment and pleasures, and these are found in the church and the family. These two units, also, are helps in the pilgrim way, as means of fellowship, encouragement, and discipline.

The Reformed Pastor of Kidderminster, Richard Barter, was born in 1615, near Shrewsbury, to a freeholder, Richard Baxter. He was given an education by the local clergy, whom he saw as incompetent and drunkards. Consequently, he was born into a family that was 'free from the temptations of poverty and riches'<sup>84</sup>. Although his father was converted from his worldly ways and his addiction to 'gaming', when Richard was ten, through the reading of the scriptures, with the consequential influence upon his son, Richard lists in his autobiography<sup>85</sup> his sins of childhood, His conversion, however, comes a little later, and he attributes it to two events, Firstly, when the local Morris dancers derided his father as a Puritan, for reading scripture, he was inclined to forgo the pleasures of his worldly associates. He writes<sup>86</sup>:

'But when I heard them call my father Puritan it did much to cure me and alienate me from them; for I considered that ray father's exercise of reading the Scripture was better than theirs, and would surely be better thought on by all men at last; and I considered what it was for that he and others thus derided'.

---

<sup>83</sup> Greaves op.cit. p.147.

<sup>84</sup> The autobiography of Richard Baxter. Ed 3 N Lloyd Thomas (Everyman edition 1974) p.3.

<sup>85</sup> ibid p.5. The list includes such practices as would be attributed to any child, usually as naughtiness. Yet Baxter claims they are his sins and that his 'childhood conscience troubled me for a great while before they were overcome'.

<sup>86</sup> ibid p.6.

Then he finds that through the reading, of two books entitled 'Bunny's Resolution' and 'the Bruised Reed', he has a conviction of his sin. It is at about this time, that Baxter is converted from his old way of life, and begins to find the need to read scripture and 'divinity', although he, himself, finds it difficult to date his conversion writing<sup>87</sup>.

'Yet whether sincere conversion began now, or before, or after, I was never able to this day to know; for I had before had some love to the things and people which were good, and a restraint from other sins except those aforementioned; and so much from those, that I seldom committed most of them, and when I did it was with great reluctancy'

Baxter then, is perhaps more honest here than a number of writers. He claims that his conversion is due to his consciousness of his sin, but that he cannot claim a 'blinding light' conversion experience. Rather it is one that slowly 'dawns' upon him. It is not a dynamic call, as 'Christian' had, in Pilgrim's Progress. He does not deny that he was sinful, (although at times his sins seem to be due to an introspective searching) as all people have the sin of selfishness and pride:

'Though all are not fornicators, nor drunkards nor extortioners nor persecutors nor live not in the same way of sinning; yet selfishness and pride and sensuality and the love of worldly things, ignorance and ungodliness are plainly become the common corruption of the nature of man'<sup>88</sup>

Yet this realization of one's sin, and the act of conversion is not due to our own nature but to God's grace. This realization that it is the word of God's grace within us, is one of experience. Baxter writes<sup>89</sup> that a person is:

---

<sup>87</sup> ibid p.7.

<sup>88</sup> Barter, H 'What we must do to be saved' Ed. A B Grosart (Private edition 1868) p.8.

<sup>89</sup> ibid p.9.

'an unthankful rebel that is turned away from God and set against him, and defiled with all his filth of sine must needs be both renewed and reconciled, sanctified and pardoned if ever he shall be saved....And experience will tell you how insufficient you are for either of these two works yourselves : to renew your soul or to reconcile them unto God'.

Baxter himself describes how he has seen God's grace working in his life protecting him from the evil and sin all around him. Yet this is seen in retrospect. At the time he has great doubts of his salvation, because he had not had a dramatic conversion experience, and that he was still living a carnal life. His doubts, he could claim are due to Satan, who 'hindereth souls from being sanctified'<sup>90</sup>. Satan 'hardens the heart' of the person with continual diversions and delights that they continue in their sin. Others are convinced, by Satan, that the godly life is 'grievous, sad and melancholy' and that worldliness is better.

Yet, because it is God's grace that enables us to repent, Baxter claims that all people have the chance of repentance, In a sense he is a Universalist, but he qualifies this with the fact that some people die unrepentant. Consequently redemption is limited to those who repent, and these are the elect. Morgan claims that Baxter held a midway position between Calvinism and Arminianism. He alignes Barter's theology with

Amyraldus's work, whom he had read, and yet goes on to say that Baxter was not the same as Amyraldus. He says<sup>91</sup> that Baxter differed from the Calvinists in that 'he did not believe that God willed that anyone should be damned, but he thought that God did will that the elect should be saved, as an extra kind of grace, as it were'.

---

<sup>90</sup> *ibid* p.13.

<sup>91</sup> Morgan, I *The Nonconformity of Richard Baxter* (1946) p.79.

Once repentant, the Christian was saved, but that was only the beginning of the Christian life. This new life demands a rejection of the old worldly life and a resolution to live a holy life. One who lives a godly, holy life is a person who truly professes his faith. While discussing the difference between the godly and ungodly Christian, Baxter writes<sup>92</sup>:

'Search and see whether the difference be not this, that the godly are serious in their profession, and the ungodly are hypocrites, who hate and oppose the practise of the very things which themselves profess whose religion serveth but to condemn them while their lives are contrary to their tongues'

In other words, he says that faith without works is dead, and a profession of faith must be seen both in word and in action.

This can easily be seen as a doctrine of works for Salvation, but this is not so. Although Baxter insists that a Christian life is shown by repentance, desire for Christ, prayer for pardon and sincere obedience to God<sup>93</sup>, he does also insist that

'Faith alone is the Condition of Justification, and of right to Salvation and Glory, and yet that Works are also a requisite as the Fruits of that Faith, and as making way for the actual enjoyment of Glory'<sup>94</sup>.

The glory is, surely, to do the will of God, and good works are necessary to do the will of God. Works then, are a response to faith and the grace of God, as a means of professing one's faith. As such, the Christian life, must be just this also. It must embody the 'glory' of God, and the profession of one's faith.

---

<sup>92</sup> 'What we must do to be saved' p.16.

<sup>93</sup> Morgan op.cit. p.80.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Baxter 'On justifying Righteousness' (1676) p.70.

Indeed, Morgan claims<sup>95</sup> that the Christian life is the criteria for every doctrine and form of church order that Baxter held. The Christian life is to be one of holiness, and holiness is the key to the Christian doctrines. A doctrine or church order was correct only if it 'helped Christ to promote holiness'. Yet to define holiness is difficult, and to a large extent Baxter sees it as morality. Indeed it became difficult to distinguish between his preaching on holiness and morality such that he is accused of preaching mere morality. He answers this accusation in the tract 'How far holiness is the design of Christianity'. In it he claims that God is the object of both holiness and morality<sup>96</sup>. To the Christian the love of God was the inspiration of all holiness and morality.

Holiness is essential for the Christian, both as the individual and as a community of the family and the church. In the second part of his short booklet 'What we must do to be saved', entitled 'The Parts and Practise of a holy life for personal and family instructions', he enumerates the necessities for such a life. It is worth summarizing this as an indication of his understanding of the Christian life.

His first injunction is to know the doctrines of the church, as this will be a bulwark against sin and unbelief. The doctrines of the church he summarizes as the Apostles Creed, the Lord's prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Yet these are only summaries, for in the short catechism<sup>97</sup>, in answer to the question 'Where is the Christian religion most fully opened and entirely contained?', he writes:

'In the Holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament where...  
the history of Christ and his Apostles is sufficiently delivered,

---

<sup>95</sup> Morgan op.cit, p.81.

<sup>96</sup> Baxter, H Theological tracts vol. 1 (1630)

<sup>97</sup> 'What we must do to be saved' p.37.

the promises and doctrines of the faith are perfected, the covenant of grace more clearly opened and church offices, worship and discipline established'.

Hence although 'holiness' is the basis of all Baxter's doctrines, these doctrines are found in the Scriptures for this is the book that entirely contains all the true doctrines and beliefs of the church.

Having established the authority of the Scriptures for the basis of the Holy life, and for protection against 'infidels and heretics', the life of the Christian, although ordered by scripture must be lived by faith in Jesus Christ. For it is through Christ that we see the love of God the Father, and receive the Holy Spirit. Baxter tells us that Christ has overcome the world, the flesh, temptation and sin on our behalf, so the Christian life should be lived in this understanding. He dismisses licentiousness, as the consequence of Christ's work, saying<sup>98</sup>:

'To talk and boast of Christ is easy, and to use him for the increase of our carnal security, and boldness in sinning but to live in the daily use of Christ to those ends of his office, to which he is by us to be made use of, is a matter of greater skill and diligence than many self-esteeming professors are aware'.

Rather the way that we should use Christ is to:

'Let his doctrine and the pattern of his most perfect life, be always before you as your rule... Take him as the root of your life, and mercies, and live as upon him and by his life;... To live as Christ and use him in every want and address to God, is more than a general confused believing in him'<sup>99</sup>.

True doctrine, and imitation of Christ is the basis for the holy life. Without an understanding, Baxter implies, we cannot live a holy life, as we could only have a confused belief, and this will probably lead us into licentiousness. And this is where Baxter sees the Holy Spirit completing

---

<sup>98</sup> 'The Christian Directory' in The Complete Works of H Baxter Ed. W One (1830) Vol 2 p.175.

<sup>99</sup> 'What we must do to be saved' p.21-2.



his work in the members of Christ's body. The Spirit has inspired the apostles and prophets to derive correct doctrines, and now to sanctify the true believers to believe and obey these doctrines, and to regenerate them and govern them<sup>100</sup>. As it is the Spirit that nourishes and sanctifies our lives, as Christians, it is important that 'he dwell and operate in them, as the life of thy soul, and that thou do not resist or quench the Spirit, but thankfully obey him'<sup>101</sup>. Yet the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Christian, has the end that we shall see and know God. As he is the object of holiness, it is He that we should 'live wholly upon'. Hence the Christian should seek after only what is pleasing to God, and this is principally 'love'. Indeed God is our end, and it is to and for him that we should live, and this too is a driving force. Baxter writes<sup>102</sup>:

'A life of godliness is our living unto God as God, as being absolutely addicted to him'

Another reason for living the Christian life in holiness is the end of 'the belief and hope of heaven'. This is something that we are travelling towards. It is the end, of the Pilgrim's journey, and as such one's eyes should always be set upon the goal. The Christian must live, as if he were seeking this heaven, and our actions must be in accord with this final goal. But this striving after a righteousness, is not without its pleasures.

'How seemly it is, and how injurious to your profession for one that saith he hopeth for heaven, to live as sadly as those that have no higher hopes than earth. How should that man be filled with joy, who must live in the joys of heaven for ever'<sup>103</sup>

The Christian life is not 'irksome or tedious'.

---

<sup>100</sup> ibid p.22.

<sup>101</sup> 'Christian Directory' p.189.

<sup>102</sup> ibid p471

<sup>103</sup> 'What we must do to be saved' p.24-5.

If heaven, God and holiness have their joys and pleasures, so too Satan will try to balance the situation, with the pleasures, wealth, and honours of the world, The 'pomp and vanities' of the world are a distraction from the true life of faith, and therefore it is advisable to stay clear of all temptations. It is better to have nothing of worldly things of riches or the like, that can so easily become a priority in the life of the person, for 'that man who hath anything in the world so dear to him, that he cannot spare it for Christ, if he call for it is no true Christian'<sup>104</sup>, These pleasures of the world, can so easily be seen to be gifts from God, and become 'sweet and amiable', but this is only to trap us into temptation and sin. Baxter's answer is to 'Fear the world'<sup>105</sup> in such circumstances. He warns that we should recognize our weaknesses and guard against them.

'Know what it is you are in most danger of : whether lust and idleness or excess in meats, or drinks or play: and there set your strongest watch for your preservation temptation leads to sin and small sins to greater sins, and these to hell. And sin and hell are not to be played with'<sup>106</sup>.

As temptations can be made against any part of the person, it is therefore necessary to 'keep a constant skilful government over your passions and your tongues... and thoughts'. Indeed one's thoughts should only be in how to be 'good'.

Like Mercy in Pilgrim's Progress, the correct use of time is essential. Every minute will have to be accounted for. Therefore idleness will be reckoned with, for idleness leads to 'needless sports and play' and will be a hindrance, (Do we here see an allusion to his own temptation to the Norris dancers?) Rather the life of a Christian should be busy, in helping our neighbour.

---

<sup>104</sup> The Reformed Pastor p.67

<sup>105</sup> 'What we must do to be saved'p.26.

<sup>106</sup> ibid

'Live not in idleness; be not slothful in your work be you bound or free; in the sweat of your brows you must eat your bread, and labour the six days that you may have to give to him that needeth: slothfulness is sensuality as well as filthier sins',<sup>107</sup>

This is selfishness, and will rid our thoughts of ambition and covetousness and the like, which are the cause of all cruelty and all 'factions and contentions and persecutions in the world'<sup>108</sup>, Even ambition and covetousness in religion is a sin, as this is pride, and will lead to a disinterest in the needy, rather than a love of them,

'Instead of having compassion on the weak, you will be unruly and despisers of your guides and censorious contemnners of all that differ from you, and persecutors of them if you have power, and will think all intolerable that take you not as oracles and your word as law',<sup>109</sup>

Finally Baxter's little booklet insists that the family is one of the most important institutions for preserving the holiness of life. It is the duty of the family to be knowledgeable about the scripture, and it is the duty of the father or head of the family to teach)the family. It is he who must 'talk with them seriously about the state of their souls and everlasting life; pray with them fervently; watch over them diligently; be angry against sin and meek in your own cause; be examples of wisdom, holiness and patience; and see that the Lord's day be spent in holy preparation for eternity'<sup>110</sup>, In the 'Christian Directory', while speaking of the means of defending the Christian against the attacks of Satan, Baxter writes<sup>111</sup>:

'He [Christ] giveth a very strict charge to parents to devote their children, with themselves to God; encouraging then with the promise of his accepting and blessing them; and commandeth them

---

<sup>107</sup> *ibid* p.29.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid* p.32.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid* p.31.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid* p.32.

<sup>111</sup> 'Christian Directory' Vol. II p.275.

to teach them the word of God, with greatest diligence, and to bring them up in the nurture and fear of God'

Barter's understanding, then, of the Christian life, is that it must be in response to the call. This will include repentance, and a striving towards holiness. This holiness is the only means of showing that the Christian is 'absolutely addicted to God', and is on his way to the heavenly goal. And if a definition of this life is to be given, then, the holy life is a life in imitation of Christ. This will bring joys and pleasures that are only found in heaven, but they do not come easily. For, the Christian life is also a warfare; a continual battle against sin and temptation.

'Spend all your days in a skilful, vigilant, resolute, and valiant war against the flesh, the world and the devil, as those that have covenanted to follow Christ the Captain of your Salvation.'<sup>112</sup>

And because of the great temptations of the world, and the means that Satan uses to tempt the Christian, which includes one's near relatives, governments and rulers of the world, weak and scandalous ministers, as well as the obvious pervayers of sin, such as those that are rich and worldly<sup>113</sup>. Indeed Barter is so concerned that the Christian should not be tempted, that he all but commends a life of separation from the sinful aspects and people of the world. The sinners will influence the Christian, who will fall to the 'lowest denominator'.

'He [Satan] commonly useth men that are themselves first deceived and corrupted ... they will be willing to make other men of their mind, and to have the company of others in their way. A drunkard is fit to make a drunkard; and a filthy fornicator to entice another into sin; and a gamester to make a gamester; and a wanton time waster to draw another to waste his time in wantonness and foolish sports; an ambitious or proud person is fit to kindle

---

<sup>112</sup> ibid p.258

<sup>113</sup> ibid p.268-274., gives the full list of Baxter's understanding of the instruments and methods of Satan.

that fire in others; a swearer is fittest to make a swearer; and so of many other sins.'<sup>114</sup>

But these temptations can be combatted and overcome, by the imitation of Christ, and by living in knowledge of faith, Godliness, thankfulness, obedience, humility, 'heavenly-mindedness', love to others, self denial and patience. When this is so, and the Christian is therefore showing a holy life, he will not only not succumb to temptation, but will be an example to the sinful, that will show up their sinfulness, and cause them to repent.

'A holy Christian is a living image of God, a powerful convincer and teacher of the ungodly; and the nearer men come to them, the greater excellency they will see, and the greater efficacy they will feel.'<sup>115</sup>

Is it then any wonder, that Baxter charges the pastor to 'see that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought in your own souls', 'that your example contradict not your doctrine' and 'that you live not in those sins against which you preach to others'<sup>116</sup>. The Christian, holy life, is not just for the individual piety, but as an example and a means of spreading the gospel, and encouraging sinners to repentance.

---

<sup>114</sup> ibid p.268.

<sup>115</sup> ibid p.273.

<sup>116</sup> 'The Reformed Pastor' p.53, 63 & 67.

Although the Puritan understanding of doctrines and faith cannot be stated, as there is too great a diversity within the Puritan theology, it is worthwhile to draw some conclusions, and to develop a general Puritan stand on the Christian life, although it can never be complete or all-embracing.

To start with, we must appreciate that the essential doctrine of the puritans is that the Bible is the sole authority for all their activities, doctrines and faith, And yet we have also seen that other written works have had an influence on the Puritans and their thinking. The Puritans looked to people such as Richard Baxter, and John Bunyan, as people who truly expounded the Christian faith, and so followed their example. The authority of Baxter and his writings, can be seen in the 'success' that he achieved in Kidderminster in converting his flock, to living a truly holy life in Christ. His success is shown that while he was there, the church had to add five galleries to the building to try to accommodate the public who came to listen to Baxter<sup>117</sup>. Both Bunyan and Baxter lived out their faith, and beliefs and were persecuted for them, Hence this added to their authority, as they were able to reflect upon the scripture in the light of their experiences.

With this understanding, of the revealed word of God 'from one end to the other', then their understanding of the Christian life reflects both the law of the Old Testament and the Gospel of the New. It will contain not only the 'thou shalt nots', but also the 'thou shalts'. The Law has to be encountered first and then the gospel is understood. In Pilgrim's Progress, the Law is by-passed fairly quickly on the road to the Heavenly city, but it is never ignored or forgotten; it's influence is always apparent. So too

---

<sup>117</sup> 'Autobiography' p.79.

Baxter understands that the Law is still valid, and that our actions and sins will have to be accounted for, and judged.

But to stress the law, to a too great extent, and to view the Puritan as a kill joy who refused to allow anything but the 'thou shalt not's' is to misconstrue his understanding. There is pleasure and enjoyment in the Christian life, and the Puritan is not a kill joy. To have an understanding similar to that expressed in the sentiment that the Puritans preached against bear baiting, not because it caused the bear pain, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators is to completely misunderstand their theology. This is basically a 'second form history' impression. The characteristics found in such textbooks are unfair to the evidence. My own recollection is of an illustration in one such book, of a member of the New Model Army, outside a theatre with a notice across the door 'closed for good' - a totally false picture. Haller writes that the code of life of a Puritan<sup>118</sup> 'was much more than a table of prohibitions. It was the program of an active, not a monastic or contemplative life'. Likewise, it is not to be confused with the traditional 'victorian' puritanism, that was rather legalistic, concerned to express the 'thou shalt not's' in public, while breaking then and keeping the 'thou shalt's' behind closed doors. In other words expressing the Judgement and Law of God without the gospel, a fear without love.

But not to digress too far, the Puritan understanding, then, in the seventeenth century was one of 'the use not the abuse of God's gifts'. As all things belong to God, and are given, temporarily for our use, then it is important for the Puritan to make proper use of all his assets, skills and the like. This is good stewardship and we are 'but stewards of thy

---

<sup>118</sup> Haller op.cit.. p.123.

bounty, held in solemn trust for thee', to quote the hymnwriter<sup>119</sup>. As with each gift, so then, with the whole of life, it is to be used for God; his gifts returned to him for his use, and not to be abused. The abuse of God's gift is to sin, and this is not compatible with the holy life of a Christian.

The Christian life begins at salvation, and the new life in Christ is to be contrasted with the old life. It is not an outgrowth of the old life, but a completely new beginning, although it may not be a 'lightning' change. Much of the writings of the 17th century Puritans were in the form of biographies and diaries, which are often a substitute for the Homan confessional<sup>120</sup>. The greatest of these is perhaps Bunyan's 'Grace abounding' while Baxter relates his sins in the early pages of his 'autobiography'. The writers show how the grace of God, acting upon them gives an understanding of sin, salvation, and justification. We have seen how Bunyan, typifies the Puritan understanding of Salvation as threefold. There is the conviction of sin, an evangelical revelation, and the call of Jesus<sup>121</sup>.

Their understanding of sin is derived through Calvin and Augustine, from St Paul and particularly the letter to the Romans. The first revelation of God's will was in the Law, but man disobeyed and so 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God<sup>122</sup>. But then comes grace, and through the righteousness of one man, Christ, the act of Adam has been reversed so that

---

<sup>119</sup> Lowry, S C 'Son of God, Eternal Saviour'

<sup>120</sup> Hailer op.cit.. p.9k But it is not as simple as this. The preacher had, to live his preaching, and so show the working of God's grace in his life. Also as God was working and delivering in all aspects of life, one should keep a record of all these things. It was also a means of reflecting upon the sinfulness of oneself, and so being able to impose a self-discipline.

<sup>121</sup> Greaves op.cit. p.84.

<sup>122</sup> Romans 3 v 23.



we all can have the free gift of Justification<sup>123</sup>. The Christian is not saved by keeping the Law himself, but by receiving Christ into his spirit, which is done by believing in Him, who has fulfilled the Law for all people.

The Christian life then begins with a definite Christian experience; whether it be a 'lightning experience' or one that slowly dawns, it is due (both according to Bunyan and Baxter) to a contemplation on life and the Word of God. This experience though is brought about by God, who is working within the individual. It did not come through the church, baptism of the like - these do not save, it was God through Christ who saved. We are by Law condemned for sin, but by grace saved through faith<sup>124</sup>. But although saved and justified he was still a sinner and Adam's sin is still with him. It was inevitable that although, through Christ, the Christian now had a free choice to choose righteousness, he would not always do so. The fatal thing, for the Christian, writes Knappen 'was not to sin but to tolerate and enjoy it'<sup>125</sup>. This is very much the attitude of Barter, that sin is to be avoided at all costs. It is when Christian is tempted by the worldly pleasures, and particularly vanity fair, that he loses the road to the Heavenly City. He again finds the road when he is repentant, and casts himself upon God. Repentance is of extreme importance, and at true repentance the Holy Spirit would give the Christian 'the peace that passes understanding',

The Christian then is to avoid sin and its temptations, and therefore strive for the holy life. A life that is in accord with God, and dependant upon God. In this attitude, we can see a reaction to the medieval attitude of the church and people. The Christian life is a new life, and as such it

---

<sup>123</sup> I Corinthians 15

<sup>124</sup> Galatians 2 v 16, Ephesians 2 v 8.

<sup>125</sup> Knappen op.cit.. p.395

must be seen to be different from the old way of life. It must involve a distinctive life-style. And this is what the Puritans hoped to achieve. It was not a life-style that avoided the world, but one that was in the world, and concerned for it yet apart from it. Yet it was a lifestyle that could rise above the temptations of the world.

Although they rejected much of the medieval church doctrines, they could not dismiss the necessity for good works, A life that was in accord with God, would be one that would show good works. It was to be a life without sin, which was to be an imitation of Christ, and a life that was a pilgrimage to the heavenly city. The Puritan experiment, like Calvin's Geneva, was to be a kingdom of God upon earth. It was to be a reflection of the life in the heavenly city. But because the kingdom of God upon earth, involved imperfect mortals, it must also involve a discipline, which at its best would be a self-discipline. This self-discipline then would be that which necessitates good works.. Hence there are two reasons for the Christian to do good works. Because they are a response to the faith, and that a life in communion with God will emanate good works, and failing that, it is part of the pilgrimage to the Heavenly City, and a bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth, Works when are not for salvation, or reward, but as a reflection of the relationship with God.

But as said earlier this life of good works and discipline should not lead to a morbid life, but one of enjoyment and pleasure. A life of good works is a reflection of the enjoyable life that is found when there is a true relationship with God. It is a life that uses God's gifts, because he has given them to be used. And indeed the Puritans did use the gifts that they had been given. Increase Mather said of Drink<sup>126</sup>:

---

<sup>126</sup> as cited in Miller and Johnson op.cit. p.2.

'Drink is in itself a good creature of God, and to be received with thankfulness, but the abuse of drink is from Satan; wine is from God, but the Drunkard is from the Devil',

and this was the same with all things. The Christian has the use of God's gifts for pleasure, but not for selfishness. He is the 'steward' of the gifts, and he will attain pleasure in using there gifts for others, because in so doing they will be for 'God's pleasure'.

However the Puritan was not only concerned for himself and his own well being. He did not work good works, simply so that he could therefore claim that he had, salvation. Good works come out of salvation, not the other way around. It was the life of the Puritan, in all its aspects that had to show his salvation, and relationship with God, and not just the doing of some good works. Consequently because his faith had to permeate the whole of his life, he had a distinctive life-style. This in itself was an example and means of evangelization. The Puritan preacher had to live out his preaching; his evangelism was in both word and action.

But this distinctive life-style, based upon the understanding that his faith had to permeate all of his life, meant that the secular and the sacred came together. All things were done to the glory of God, and this included the family life, private life, and work. The gifts that God gave to his people were not confined to the 'Spiritual gifts', but were all gifts, and all of these have an equality of value and use both to the Puritan and God. But to way that all things must be done to the glory of God, does not imply that anything was a means of glorifying God, hut rather

the Puritan could only do those things that pleased God. One could play games, dance, and have 'healthful divertisement'; but not gamble, play

cards, or have mixed dancing (as this was immoral), Of course Sunday observance was important, not because it was wrong to play games and have 'divertissements' but because this distracted for the purpose of Sunday, as a day of rest, and a time to worship God, To be tempted away from the worship of God, was to be tempted into sin.

Perhaps the greatest aspect of the puritan life, that has been discussed, is that which produced Capitalism. The understanding that all work was to the glory of God, provided the impetus for the Puritan to work hard at his business, and most were self-employed. But as this was a gift from God, it was to be used and not abused. Business ethics for the Puritan, are laid out, or at least the guidelines are found in the Scriptures. Therefore, business practice, was to be in accord with the faith, and the direction of Scripture. It is only when Puritan business practice gives way to Capitalism, that the Scriptural guidelines are lost sight of. And this is so with much of Puritanism. The ideal is soon lost sight of, and as the Christian becomes tempted by the sin of the world, because he comes too close to it (Baxter would say), Puritanism becomes extreme, and is no longer Puritanism. Capitalism, as portrayed by Weber and Tawney<sup>127</sup> does not show Capitalism developed from Puritanism, but rather how it developed from the corruption of the Puritan ideal. Likewise de Klerk<sup>128</sup>, although wrongly classifying the Afrikaans Calvinism with Puritanism, shows how the true Calvinistic doctrine becomes distorted, to produce the society of white South Africa today, A society that, apart from its distortion of the doctrine of election, has been so tempted by the sin of worldly wealth, that it no longer bears any resemblance to the trekboer's society of the 19th century.

---

<sup>127</sup> Weber N., Protestantism and the rise of Capitalism; Tawney H H., Religion and the rise of Capitalism.

<sup>128</sup> op.cit.

Hence in this essay we have seen the essence of the Puritan understanding of the Christian life, without going into the details, and have held to the ideal of that doctrine, and not the development and distortion of the doctrine in the later years. Undoubtedly, Baxter and Bunyan, wrote of the ideal, and even their own lives (although this is speculation rather than evidence) probably did not come up to the ideal. Likewise other people of the time who were labelled and derided as Puritans would not have held to these ideals, in the same way as the Afrikaner is no Calvinist today. The important point then, is not to judge Puritanism, and the particular aspect of it in this essay, in the light of a distorted, and debased development of it, but in its true, idealistic form.

The Puritans then claimed that the only response to God and his call, was a life of holiness, and this would inevitably mean that it was a life that was distinctive with respect to the world around them. It was determined by a fresh look at the Scriptures, with an understanding that within those scriptures was to be found the basis of the Christian life and life-style. Perhaps the two favourite passages of Scripture were I Peter 1 v 14-16

'As obedient children, do not be conformed, to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy"'.<sup>129</sup>

and Leviticus 11 v 44-45

"For I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am Holy ... For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the Land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy"<sup>129</sup>.

The passage from Peter's letter, in fact begins with the exhortation to 'Gird up your loins', i.e. be ready for action, both spiritually and mentally, as well as physically, and this is achieved by sobriety, which is self control and clarity of mind. The Christians are children of obedience, to God, (cf. Ephesians 2 v 1-3 etc.), and this is shown by 'framing their lives according to their baptismal promises'<sup>130</sup>. The new life in Christ is distinctive and should be holy, set apart. The Christian response to God's holiness is a life set apart for God. As his servants and children, the life of a Christian is no longer his own, but belongs to God. It is he that has called the Christian, and sanctified him, and so the Christian submits to God. God is holy, and he is the standard that the Christian must aim at. The Pauline concept is much the same thing, in Ephesians 4 v 1, and. I Thessalonians 2 v 12, where the reader is exhorted 'to lead a life worthy

---

<sup>129</sup> Quotations from The Revised Standard Version

<sup>130</sup> Kelly, J N B The Epistles of Peter and Jude p.67.

of God, who is calling you into his kingdom and glory'. Likewise the Johannine argument (i John 3 v 2-3)

'Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure'<sup>131</sup>.

The example of the Christian is God Himself, and as God was most perfectly seen in Christ, then the essence and example of the Christian life can be found in the way that he lived, and in his relationship to God. Michael Green writes<sup>132</sup>:

'As ever, you find your example in Jesus. The supreme ambition of his life was to please his heavenly Father... "Christ didn't please himself", said Paul with masterly understatement. The implication for Christians is so obvious that it scarcely needs drawing'.

The Christian life, then is a new life of holiness, that is a response to the love and holiness of God. But it is not a ritual holiness but one that permeates every action and thought of the Christian. It is a life that has freedom from sin, not so that we can sin, but to be able not to sin. Kelly sums it up by writing<sup>133</sup>:

'Holiness thus understood does not stand for mere ritual purity, as certain strata of the Old Testament .., might at first sight seem to indicate; rather it connotes the freedom from sin and absolute moral integrity which fellowship with God makes imperative'

The Christian life is a new life that has been brought about by the grace of God, with God as the example, and the scriptures as the guide. The protestant believes that to have a true relationship with God, the person

---

<sup>131</sup> Revised Standard Version

<sup>132</sup> Green, N New life, new lifestyle (1973) p.72.

<sup>133</sup> Kelly op.cit, p.69.

must be righteous. This is of course only achieved as a gift from God. It is he, through his Holy Spirit, that sanctifies the Christian, and if the Christian is made holy, then he will use that gift, given to him, for the glory of God, and so respond with a life of Holiness. The guidelines are found in Scripture, which the Protestant believes is the only authority for his faith and life. However, there are many ways of interpreting the scriptures, so there will be diverse ways of showing the holiness of one's life, that has been imparted to the Christian.

But the life of holiness cannot be perfect, as man is sinful, and does not have a true relationship with God. Consequently the right response to God's gift is to strive towards a true relationship with God. It is man who destroys the true relationship with God, by his sinfulness, and it can only be restored through Christ, through man's repentance. Hence the life of a Christian, must be a life that shuns temptation and sin, and seeks for a life of repentance, humility and holiness. Life, then, is to be a battle, that must be fought. Yet it is a battle that is fought by God, through the Holy Spirit on behalf of the Christian.

The Puritan of the 16th and 17th century responded to God's call by a life of holiness, which he found to be a continual warfare. He determined his distinctive life-style from the scriptures, to be an example to the people about him. His interpretation of the scriptures is meaningful for us today, because it still speaks to us, We are not concerned with detail, here, such as bear baiting and the like, but with the principles of the life-style. 'Worldliness' is still a temptation to sin, and the Christian does not live his life with this as the basis, but rather scripture and holiness. The Christian life must involve a rejection of the pleasures for the self, and an acceptance only of the things that are 'pleasing to God'. This produces a distinctive Christian life-style for the Christian, and a life-style that



is a puritan life-style, because it is developed from the same premises as the Puritan developed his understanding of life,

Yet the life-style, in detail will be different. Today the Christian will be concerned with a total world view. His response to God. of holiness, will include a moderating of his way of life and standard of living, for the benefit of all others. He will be concerned, not just for his own piety, and for the conversion of others, but for the needs of others throughout the world. 'Holiness' today will be interpreted in a different way to that of the 17th century, but it will still include, a striving not to sin, but to be in a true relationship with God. The overtures of this are immense, in the world view of the 20th century. It will include, possibly, such understandings as 'vegetarianism', 'conservation', lowering the standard of living in the West for the benefit of the third world countries, and 'Charismatic' Christianity. Perhaps the 'Renewal' movement, throughout the world, could be seen as the 'Puritan' movement, for it seeks, the total infilling of the Spirit, so that the life of the Christian can be lived in accord with God, in Holiness.

In short, the Puritan life-style, as outlined in this essay, is the Christian life-style, as it contains the correct response to God's gift of salvation the response of holiness. Paul exhorts the Philippians to live in holiness as he writes

'Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that ,... I may hear of you that you stand firm in one Spirit, with one mind .. striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.'<sup>134</sup>

He speaks to us as well!

---

<sup>134</sup> Philippians 1 v 27-28 Revised Standard Version.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Furlong M., (1979) Puritan's Progress  
Greaves R.L., (1969) John Bunyan  
Haller W., (1938) The Rise of Puritanism  
Knappen M.M., (1939) Tudor Puritanism  
Martin H., (1954) Puritanism and Richard Baxter  
Miller P. & Johnson T.H., (1939) The Puritans  
Morgan I., (1949) The Non-conformity of Richard Baxter  
Talon H., (1950) John Bunyan

#### **Texts:**

- Baxter R., (1868) What We Must do to be Saved (ed. A.R. Grosart)  
(1974) Autobiography (ed. J.M. Lloyd Thomas)  
Bunyan J., (1907) Pilgrim's Progress (ed. H.E. Lewis)  
Calvin J., (1960) The institutes of the Christian Religion (ed. J.T. McNeil.)