

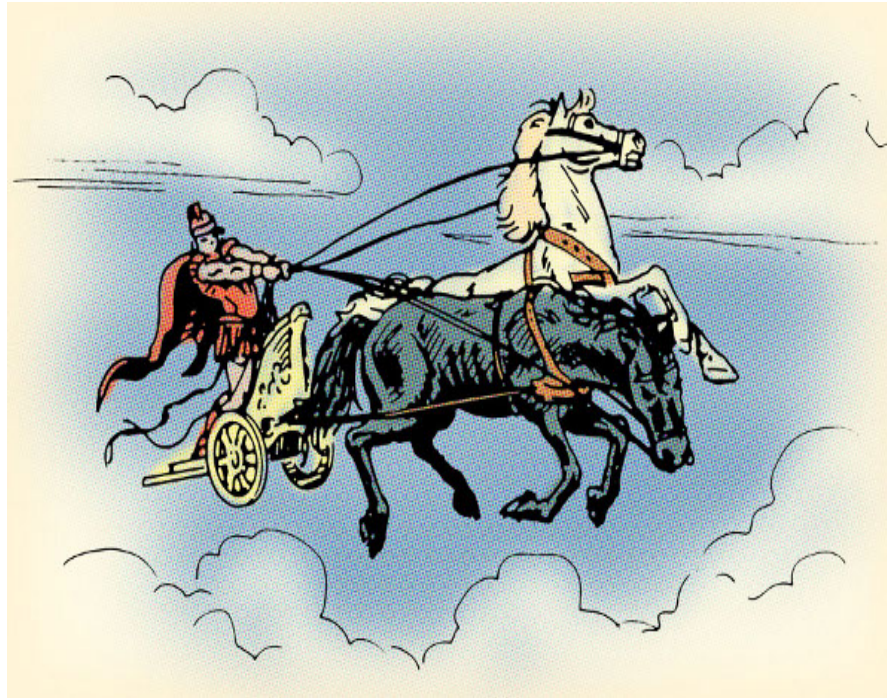
The Foundations of Puritanism

Understanding the Protestant Reformation

Foundations of Christian theology

- Christian theology was influenced by Greek philosophy, in particular Plato
- Plato: The soul is divided into three: **Reason**, **will** and the **appetites**

The chariot analogy



- St. Paul → St. Augustin

Adam and Eve fall from Paradise by sinning against **God's law** (Book of Genesis)

- After the Fall Adam ceases to be ruled by **Reason**. His **Reason** and **Will** become subjected to the **Appetites**
- This is the Human Condition after the Fall (Original Sin) and the consequence is **Eternal Damnation**
- Only the **Saving Grace** of **Jesus Christ** can restore the **Divine Order**

- There is one safe island in the raging ocean of the **Fallen World: the Church** (Catholic and Apostolic)
- The individual Christian obtains access to the saving grace of Jesus through **confession, prayer and holy communion**
- ***Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*** (outside the Church there is no salvation)

Catholic abuses in Medieval and Renaissance times

- Mass becomes an empty ritual, performed by illiterate and immoral priests
- A worldly church perceived to be more preoccupied with its own power than with the salvation of souls
- The catholic faith deteriorates into superstition (miracles, worship of relics...)
- Indulgences



The beginning of the Reformation

- A German monk and professor of theology, **Martin Luther**, opposed the idea that salvation could be purchased with money
- Nailed his **Ninety-Five theses** to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg in 1517, sparking the Reformation
- Refusal to retract resulted in his excommunication by **Pope Leo X**

St. Paul: Epistle to the Romans 3:20-24

- “For (again from **Scripture**) ‘no human being can be justified in the sight of God’ for having kept the Law: law brings only the consciousness of sin.
- But now, quite independently of law, God’s justice has been brought to light.
- The Law and the prophets both bear witness to it: it is God’s way of righting wrong, effective through **faith** in Christ for all who have such **faith** – all, without distinction.
- For all alike have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendor, and all are justified by God’s free **grace** alone, through his act of liberation in the person of Christ Jesus.”

- **Sola Fides** ('by faith alone')
- **Sola Gratia** ('by God's grace alone')
- **Sola Scripture** ('by Scripture alone'): The Bible is the only source for Christian doctrine → It should be accessible to everybody (not just to priests)

- The **Bible** takes the place of the (Roman, Apostolic) **Church** as the necessary **link** between the individual and the **Grace of God**
- **Scripture** is the authoritative basis of **faith** and faith the only precondition of **God's grace**
- **Printing** and **translations** into the **vernacular** makes the Bible accessible to all who can read
- The **pulpit** replaces the **altar** as the focal centre in the Reformed Church



Calvin (1509-1564)

- Principal figure in the development of Puritanism
- Advocated the **Doctrine of Predestination:**
- A) All events have been willed by God
- B) God foreknows whom he will save (the elect) and who will be damned
- Preached in Geneva









The Puritans: Why were they dissatisfied with the Church of England?

- King James I retains the church hierarchy and the basic elements of the Catholic mass
- Royal attempts to impose liturgical uniformity on all subjects leads to confrontation with the Puritans
- Central question: What is to be at the centre of the church service, the pulpit or the communion table?

The Puritans

- God is angry with England for its tolerance of **idolatry** (worship of physical objects, rather than God's Word)
- God punishes whole nations for tolerating sin
- A group of Puritans sailed to America to found a new society based on the Bible.
- They established a new **covenant** with God

The Puritan Mind

- Puritans see the **world** as a **wilderness** and the **church of the elect** as a **garden** in the middle of a wilderness of sin
- The garden needs a **hedge** around it (discipline)
- The **devil** is ready to enter any hole made in the edge by sinful behavior → The wilderness always threatens to invade the garden

- **Sin** must be rigorously suppressed
- The godly (the elect) suppress their own sins through **inner discipline** (reason governs the will and the appetites)
- The ungodly need to be controlled by **outward force**

Bibliography

- St Paul, *Letter to the Romans, New English Bible*, 1961
- Owen Chadwick, *The Penguin History of the Church: The Reformation*, 1964
- Christopher Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians*, John Knox Press, 2002