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PURITANISM: ITS HISTORY, SPIRIT AND INFLUENCE.

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IT would be safe to say that the name "Puritan" implies to most people to-day a type of person of a forbidding and unattractive character, one who was in the main opposed to a healthy and natural enjoyment of life, and whose code of morals was usually associated with the "thou shalt not" of the Decalogue. To sum him up in popular phraseology we think of the Puritan as a stern typical "kill-joy," and if we are interested in history we recall the era of Puritan ascendancy and power with a sense of repulsion or at least with a sigh of relief that we live in freer and happier days. As a recent writer well expresses it, "To modern ears the word (Puritan) naturally suggests the dour look and sombre habit familiar in fiction and in art, as typifying an austere code of morals and a harsh and narrow outlook upon life" (Tatham, *The Puritans in Power*, p. 1).

There is no doubt that there were distinct eccentricities and idiosyncrasies about the genuine Puritan which have lent a certain measure of truth to these impressions, and which very easily enable him to be caricatured and held up as a butt for scorn and ridicule, but to dismiss Puritans or Puritanism in this contemptuous manner is to display a criminal ignorance of history and wilfully to shut our eyes to the profound influence which the Puritan movement has exerted on our national life and character. A little knowledge of its history, spirit and influence would soon rescue the name from obloquy and demonstrate the great debt which we owe to the movement.

The early ancestry of the Puritan, as Dr. Coulton has so fully pointed out,[1] is to be sought for in the history of the early Friars, whose principles and practices resembled in a remarkable degree those of the later Puritans. There was the same doctrine of conversion and personal assurance of salvation. The same gloomy, austere outlook on life and exaggerated other-worldliness in conduct. The same sighs and groans in prayer and the same great reality of hell. There was also a striking similarity in the simplicity of their worship and in the barrenness of ritual and ceremonial, and in the dislike of Church music. Even slovenliness of worship and general neglect of Church buildings were features common to both movements.

These comparisons receive very full confirmation from a recently published work on "Preaching in Medieval England," in which Dr. Owst declares that "all that that unpopular word Puritanism has ever stood for to the minutest detail, shall be found advocated unceasingly in the preaching of the Pre-Reformation Church. The

[1] In his *Medieval Studies*.

long face, the plain diet, the plainer attire, the abstention from sports and amusements in company, the contempt of the arts, the rigid Sabbatarianism, the long household prayers, the stern disciplining of wife and children, the fear of hell, are typical of the message of the faithful friar."

But the name "Puritan" was first applied in derision to those more advanced Reformers who in Edward VI's reign contended for what they considered an absolutely "pure" Scriptural form of worship, purged entirely of all medieval and popish usages and superstitious practices. In its extreme form it involved a rejection of all forms and ceremonies in worship not *expressly commanded* in Scripture. Consequently the "non-conforming" clergy in Elizabeth's reign, who refused to wear the surplice and square outdoor cap, which they described as "rags of Antichrist," were styled "Puritans," and they soon gained an unpleasant notoriety as factious and irreconcilable disturbers of the peace of Church and Nation. Half a century later, through the influence of Archbishop Laud and his party of Arminian churchmen, the connotation of the term was widened to include all the *conforming* clergy of Calvinistic opinions (and up to this time these had formed the large majority) who opposed Laud's ecclesiastical reforms. Laud drew up a list of clergy with a view to preferment in the Church, and put after these names the letters "O" and "P" to signify Orthodox, standing for those clergy who shared his own views ("orthodoxy is my 'doxy"), and Puritan, for those of Calvinistic opinions. We can imagine how much preferment the "P's" would receive! Thus the name "Puritan" soon stood for those clergy and laity, whether inside or outside the National Church, who were opposed to Arminian or High Church doctrines and principles both in Church and State, and who were exasperated by the persecuting policy inaugurated by Archbishop Laud. The party therefore which supported the Parliament in its struggle with the absolutism of the king, and in the course of this struggle, largely through force of political circumstances, overthrew episcopacy in favour of presbyterianism, was pre-eminently *Puritan.*

But if such is the history of the term, what were the main principles and ideals which inspired the Puritan party? For in spite of its accidental divisions into a conforming and a non-conforming section, in its outstanding religious principles it was one party. We may safely affirm that its fundamental principle was, that it is righteousness alone which exalts a nation; and the great aim and ideal of the Puritans was to make England a "holy nation," a people conspicuous for purity of life, doctrine and worship. Needless to say that for this standard of purity they looked to the Bible alone. In common with all the Reformers their great appeal was to the Scriptures as the sole rule of faith and practice. Their great ideal was to frame and fashion their lives and conduct according to the primitive purity and simplicity of the days of the Apostles. They rigidly applied this standard, too often forgetting that conditions which were suitable and helpful for an infant struggling

society of believers were not necessarily the best for the life of a settled historic Christian nation. We must remember, however, before criticizing the Puritan ideals or methods what a tremendous revolution had been inaugurated through the translation and free circulation of the Scriptures. Before the Reformation the *English* Bible was almost an unknown book and the ignorance of the Scriptures, even by the clergy, was deplorable. Those few people who secretly possessed a copy of Wycliffe's Bible were in constant danger of persecution as heretics. It was the translation of the Scriptures by Tyndale and Coverdale which had done more than anything else to destroy the papal power, and such unscriptural medieval doctrines as transubstantiation, and the sacrifice of the Mass, and it was the Bible alone which created Puritan England. There was, we must remember, very little other English literature, and the Bible was therefore the one book which all Englishmen read. It was a new book and came to them with a freshness and charm which it is impossible for us to imagine. In the well-known language of Green, "England was the people of a book and that book was the Bible." The Puritans were pre-eminently the people of the Book, it transformed their characters and moulded their lives. It inspired them with a passionate zeal for purity and righteousness, and with a seriousness of purpose which led to a stern opposition to everything which savoured of a godless frivolity and levity in conversation or conduct. The moral effect produced by the Bible was, as Green says, "simply amazing," "a new moral and spiritual impulse spread through every class" (*Short History*, 449).

It is impossible to estimate correctly the Puritan character and ideals unless we understand a little of the age in which the Puritans lived and the environment which surrounded them. In their theological opinions they were Evangelicals and definitely Calvinist. They held strongly the doctrines of conversion, personal assurance of salvation, justification by faith, election and often reprobation. They had, what unfortunately we lack to-day, a deep, and it must be confessed, sometimes even a morbid sense of sin. Thus they often deplored as heinously sinful, instincts which were frequently but the natural and harmless desires of a normally healthy mind. John Bunyan thought that his passion for bell-ringing and for sport and games were leading him straight to hell. In their consuming zeal for holiness, they were in danger of regarding all recreations, however innocent, other than prayer and meditation on God's Word, as inimical to godliness of life. They were too eager to denounce their early careers, before the conscious vivid realization of the work of God's Spirit in their hearts, as having been passed in utter darkness and godlessness. "Oh, how I lived in and loved darkness and hated light," says Cromwell of his early years of boyhood, when probably he had never indulged in anything seriously wrong. It would be easy to multiply examples of the excesses and extravagances of the Puritan creed and conduct. Thus the Puritans were undoubtedly narrow and one-sided in their outlook on life, they possessed very little sense of humour or of the relative value

and proportion of things. They were usually over-serious, stern, severe and often most intolerant. But many of these characteristics were faults common to their age. Intolerance was a legacy of the Middle Ages, and therefore when the Presbyterian leader, Thomas Cartwright, would have executed all heretics, even if repentant, he was merely inheriting the spirit of the Spanish Inquisition. We must remember that religious toleration was a tenet condemned by all parties at this time. It was foolishly regarded as dangerous to the peace of the State. The early Puritans, especially, shared this belief, and even the second generation never fully broke free from it, as the painful records of their persecution of the Quakers in New England abundantly testify. But we may safely affirm that it was the better and more enlightened spirits amongst the Puritans, and especially the Independents, who first advocated, even if imperfectly, the principle of freedom of conscience. Cromwell courageously refused to ban people for civil offices because of their religious convictions. Writing before the battle of Marston Moor he declared, " Sir, the State in choosing men to serve it takes no notice of their opinions, if they be willing faithfully to serve it, that satisfies." When in power he demonstrated this principle practically by the issue of a Proclamation in 1655 for religious liberty which foreshadowed the Toleration Act of 1689. Certainly these Puritan pioneers for liberty of conscience were sometimes humorously inconsistent. Although Cromwell declared liberty of conscience to be a " fundamental matter " and a " natural right," yet in his " Instrument of Government," this natural right is denied to the adherents of " prelacy " and " popery," and when he was requested by the Governor of Ross to grant liberty of conscience to a surrendered Irish garrison he replied, " As to what you say touching liberty of conscience I meddle not with any man's conscience, but if by liberty of conscience you mean liberty to exercise the Mass, I judge it expedient to use plain dealing with you and to tell you that where the Parliament of England have power that will not be allowed of."

But we may fairly say that the faults and foibles of the Puritans were largely accidental and temporary, and were far outweighed by their outstanding virtues, which have been the beneficent legacy that has so largely moulded the character and conduct of English-speaking people to the present day. They were conspicuous not only for their love of the Scriptures, but for their integrity of conduct and their fidelity to their conscientious convictions. We should not forget that what has often been derisively described as the " nonconformist conscience " is a distinct Puritan heritage. What a fine testimony to the nobility of the Puritan character is given in Frederic Harrison's description of Oliver Cromwell, when he asserts that, " In the whole history of modern Europe Oliver is the one ruler into whose presence no vicious man could come and whose service no vicious man might enter " (*Cromwell*, 208).

The Puritans were also conspicuous for their love of home and for the piety of their home life. In the humble cottage of the

peasant, as well as in the more luxurious and spacious abodes of the upper and middle classes, God's Word and name were honoured. The family altar was regularly erected both morning and evening, and by example as well as precept children were brought up "in the fear and admonition of the Lord." It is to the Puritan that we owe not only the persevering industry and the dogged tenacity of purpose, but also the real virtue and uprightness of character which still are the conspicuous features of the typical English family life to-day. Green well says that "Home as we conceive it now was the creation of the Puritan."

But if we owe the piety of our home life so largely to the Puritan, still more are we indebted to him for our reverence for the Lord's Day. Mr. Gladstone declared that the English character owed almost everything to the English Sunday and the English Bible, and both these influences are in a real sense Puritan legacies. It may be granted that the extreme Puritan was often far too rigid and pharisaic in his observance of what he described as the Sabbath, but it was the courageous stand which the Puritans made to uphold the sacred obligations of the weekly day of rest which has given us an *English*, in contrast to a "Continental" Sunday, a precious heritage which too many to-day seem determined to rob us of. The Stuart kings endeavoured to perpetuate the medieval conception of Sunday as largely a day of amusement and recreation, and James I issued a "Book of Sports" outlining the various games which might be lawfully indulged in on Sundays. The Puritan clergy stood firm in their opposition to this desecration of the Lord's Day, and refused to obey the royal order to read this proclamation from their pulpits. A few may have adopted the device of the cautious yet courageous minister who, after complying with the Royal Order, declared, "Now, brethren, having delivered to you the commands of man, I will read to you the command of God," and proceeded to recite the fourth commandment! It is perhaps a sad sign of the times that our modern advocates for Sunday sport do not trouble themselves to excuse their aim under such specious pleas as were employed in the seventeenth century, when Sunday games were urged for fear that "the common and meaner sort of people would be prevented from using such exercises as may make their bodies more able for war" (Tatham, u.s., 20). We should not forget that the author of the well-known couplet, "A Sabbath well spent, etc.," was the great Puritan Lord Chief Justice, Sir Matthew Hale, who, in spite of his exacting public duties, never travelled on Sundays or missed attending public worship on that day for thirty-six years. Canon Flynn well says of the Puritan era, "Criticize those times as we may, they produced a race of men renowned for godliness, honesty, sobriety and valour, and women of such piety, chastity and modesty and homeliness as England had never previously known, and it is doubtful if England will ever look upon the like again" (*Influence of Puritanism*, 73).

In spite of their passionate zeal for righteousness, their love of a pure, primitive and simple worship, and their hatred of forms and

ceremonies and outward display, and their seriousness of purpose, it is a mistake to regard the Puritans as a body, as *gloomy, austere and morose fanatics, who despised all culture and learning and art.* They may have rigorously excluded from their churches all pictures, images or monuments calculated to encourage superstitious worship, or to distract the spirit of the worshipper, but they still had a love for the beautiful. It is manifestly unjust to condemn a whole party on account of some excesses committed by its more extreme or fanatical members. Doubtless Cromwell's soldiers may have committed some wanton acts of vandalism or sacrilege in the churches, out of a mistaken zeal for righteousness and purity of worship, but most of the tales of destruction of monuments and architectural masterpieces, which are popularly ascribed to them, rest on very doubtful foundation. Certainly a sour and joyless asceticism was not the characteristic trait of the pre-eminent leaders of the movement. Cromwell is described by a contemporary, *who greatly disliked him,* as a man of great "vivacity and hilarity." He was fond of hunting, good music, cheerful society and a good table. Another regicide and prominent Puritan, Colonel Hutchinson, was conspicuous for his patronage of art and learning. The memoirs which his wife has left of him give us a picture which is peculiarly attractive and fascinating, and they prove that amongst the upper classes there were Puritans who combined true piety and godliness with a love of nature, mirth and innocent amusement. He fenced, rode, hawked and was a good linguist and a skilled musician. "As he had a great delight, so he had a great judgment in music, and advanced his children's practice more than their tutors. He spared not any cost for the education both of his sons and daughters in languages, sciences, music, dancing and all other qualities befitting their father's house. He was himself their instructor in humility, sobriety and all godliness and virtue, which he rather strove to make them exercise with love and delight than by constraint" (*Memoirs*, 349). Yet he was the sincere and humble Christian in belief and conduct, for "in matters of faith his reason always submitted to the Word of God, and what he could not comprehend he would believe because it was written," while with true Christian charity and humility "he never disdained the meanest or flattered the greatest."

We should also be wrong if we regarded all the Puritan theologians as hopelessly narrow, uncharitable and censorious in their creed. No doubt there were many who held a hard, cold and unlovely faith, especially as they lived in a dogmatic and intolerant age, but there were conspicuous exceptions. Probably we can find no more typical Puritan divine than the well-known author of the *Saint's Everlasting Rest.* Richard Baxter, with his chequered career of ill health and cruel persecution for conscience' sake, might well have cultivated a bitter, harsh and narrow outlook, especially as naturally he had a love of controversy; yet those who have read his striking *Self-Review* get many surprises at the charity, breadth and liberality of his sentiments. "I am much

more sensible than ever," says Baxter, "of the necessity of living upon the principles of religion which we are all agreed in and uniting these, and how much mischief men that overvalue their own opinions have done by their controversies in the Church, how some have destroyed charity and some caused schisms by them, and most have hindered godliness in themselves and others." In our struggles and aspirations towards Christian Unity to-day we certainly have not improved on these wise reflections. "Now," says Baxter, "it is the fundamental doctrines of the Catechism, which I highest value, and daily think of, and find most useful to myself and others. The Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments" furnished him, he declares, "with the most acceptable and plentiful matter for all my meditations," but he adds, "that is the best doctrine which maketh men better and tendeth to make them happy" (Wordsworth, *Eccles. Biog.*, 482–4).

But it is well to say a word as to the great influence which the Puritan movement exercised on the life of its day. Its main principles had a direct effect in moulding the political ideals and convictions of the men of that generation, and we should not forget that in so doing they moulded the course of our national history. It was not only the religious but the *political* convictions of the Puritans which brought about the Civil War, the emigrations to America and later on the revolt of the American Colonies from the Mother land. For their political principles were the direct outcome of their religious convictions and beliefs. It was only natural that the doctrine of the royal priesthood of all believers, the equality of prince and peasant in the sight of God, the sense of the Christian brotherhood of the elect as "the Lord's free people"—tenets which were peculiarly precious to the Puritans—should affect their conception of civil and political liberty. It was inevitable that their strong belief in the common ruin of mankind as well as in its common redemption by Christ's atonement should lead them to offer a strenuous resistance to claims for the divine right of kings to rule in an arbitrary and absolute manner over the Lord's redeemed people. Their sense of the great value of the human soul led them to a new conception of social equality and to the assertion of the individual rights of citizenship. The implications of their belief may not have been fully realized at first, it is taking centuries to work them out under the new names of democracy or "liberty, equality and fraternity," but they were sufficiently understood then to constitute the Puritans the champions of civil and political freedom against the tyranny and despotism of Stuart kings or of Caroline ecclesiastics. The struggles of such famous Puritan patriots as Eliot, Pym and Hampden to assert the liberty of the subject and the responsibility of the King's ministers to Parliament, and to combat the theory that the king was above all law, settled the principles of political freedom in our laws and constitution beyond recall even of the great reaction of the Restoration period. The Puritan had a dual battle to wage since the Church had foolishly allied itself with the Crown in its endeavour to govern absolutely

both in Church and State. It was the hatred of the tyranny of Laud and the bishops in Church government which led the Puritan "Church party" to espouse the parliamentary cause in the struggle with Charles I which resulted in the temporary overthrow of monarchy and episcopacy. Laud's persecuting policy drove the Puritan clergy into a hatred of episcopacy, and led them, not so much from conviction as from a prudential policy of expediency, to throw in their lot with the more extreme non-conforming and presbyterian Puritans. It was this great struggle between the Parliament and the Crown, allied with the Church, which welded together the Puritan party in their opposition to arbitrary government and to the denial of civil and religious freedom. Thus as Canon Flynn well puts it, "Wherever we can trace the democratic spirit in the State—the principle that the will of the people must prevail, and the prominence of the lay element in the Church, there you have Puritanism."

The establishment of the Commonwealth saw the high water mark of Puritan power and triumph, and it is sad to relate that the opportunity of their unfettered authority was also in the main the period of their failure. For we cannot hide the fact that those who had suffered and fought valiantly for constitutional freedom against arbitrary government, in their turn resorted to despotic and tyrannical acts when they possessed the reins of power. In the end most people would have preferred the royal despotism which had been overthrown to the military despotism of the Puritan régime. The rule of the Saints was certainly not an unqualified success. With their earnest insistence on the depravity of human nature it was singular that the Puritans made so little allowance for it in their attempt to govern a nation of fallible human beings. Cromwell exhorted his first thoroughly Puritan Parliament "that as men fearing God had fought them out of their bondage under the regal power, so men fearing God do now rule them in the fear of God"; but the rash and drastic methods of reform which they advocated soon alarmed even Cromwell, who declared that nothing was in their hearts but "overturn, overturn." Rather than this hasty and ill-considered rule of "the Saints," Cromwell preferred to govern, like Charles I, in an arbitrary and despotic manner, on his own personal authority as Protector. He naïvely excused this form of tyranny by declaring that "the people will prefer their real security to forms." Dr. Coulton is not far wrong when he says of this period that "the pursuit of an exaggerated and irresponsible other-worldliness, with all its natural fruits of frequent formality and hypocrisy, has damaged for ever the reputation of that religious revival which for the first time found itself strong enough to force time-honoured ideas for a brief moment upon an unwilling nation" (*Medieval Studies*, 1st Series, 45).

But not only was the Puritan régime a time of national security and peace, it was also a time when, owing to the brilliant victories of Blake, the Puritan Admiral, and to the vigorous foreign policy of Cromwell, England's prestige abroad was greater than it had

ever been. But nevertheless it was *not a time of liberty*, for peace and tranquillity were based on the sword. England was held in check by the hated military rule of the Major-Generals, while the pacification and subjugation of Ireland by fire and sword and cruel persecution have left an indelible stain on the justice and humanity of Puritan rule. As Green well puts it, "Among the bitter memories which part Ireland from England the memory of bloodshed and confiscation which the Puritans wrought remains the bitterest" (u.s., 572).

It seems a curious paradox to say that the fall of Puritanism saw the beginning of its real triumph, but it is true nevertheless; and possibly it cannot be better expressed than in the language of Green when he says that "Puritanism, as men believed, had fallen never to rise again. As a political experiment it had ended in utter failure and disgust. As a religious system of national life it had brought about the wildest outbreak of moral revolt that England had ever witnessed. And yet Puritanism was far from being dead; it drew indeed a nobler life from its very fall." When "it had laid down the sword it ceased from the long attempt to build up a kingdom of God by force and violence, and fell back on its truer work of building up a kingdom of righteousness in the hearts and consciences of men. It was from the moment of its seeming fall that its real victory began" (u.s., 582–6).

The influence of the Puritan spirit and ideals on moral and national righteousness from that day to the present would be difficult to overestimate. How can we measure the extent of the influence, not only on our literature, but on the religious life and character of our people, of such two pronouncedly Puritan books as Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*? We should also remember that the sufferings and persecutions which the early Puritans endured proved in the end a divine blessing on other lands to which they were driven. The "Pilgrim Fathers," although not Puritan in name, were mainly so in their spirit and religious ideals, while the large emigration of Puritan exiles to New England in Charles I's reign not only laid the foundation of the future United States, but in spite of the modern infusion of numerous peoples of other races and religions, it stamped a Puritan character on the laws, literature and religion of America which it retains to this day. It was the Puritan spirit of opposition to unjust oppression which precipitated the War of Independence. The opposition to British "tyranny" was greatest in Puritan Boston, while the Presidents of the United States have been almost without exception men of Puritan traditions and ideals. It has been well said that "the immigration from England and Scotland has mainly fixed the type of civilization alike in the United States and Canada" (*Chambers's Encyclopedia*).

If we consider the history of our country for the last two hundred years we have not to look far to discover the prominent part played by the Puritan spirit and ideals in all the beneficial reforms, both social and religious, which have been effected. The spiritual torpor,

the Latitudinarian, deistic and infidel opinions which were so rife in the first half of the eighteenth century were met and largely overcome by a religious revival which was essentially Puritan. Wesley and his fellow members of the " Holy Club " may have held a few High Church principles and practices, but not only was Wesley's ancestry definitely Puritan, but his decidedly Evangelical conversion in 1738, which really inaugurated the Methodist revival, attracted to his side all the clergy of strong Puritan convictions, and these and others of like opinions remained the life and soul of the movement both inside and later on outside the Church. The practical results of this revival were seen in the formation of the great missionary societies at the end of the century, such as the Baptist, the London, and the Church Missionary Society. These, as well as such kindred societies as the Bible Society and the R.T.S., were all due to the spiritual zeal, energy and self-sacrifice of men of Puritan Evangelical convictions. When we turn to the more purely humanitarian efforts, such as the reform of the prison life, or the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, we find that it is the Puritan who is again the pioneer. The great leader and champion of the Anti-Slavery crusade, William Wilberforce, was an Evangelical churchman converted through reading the Puritan Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, while his stalwart henchmen and supporters, like Thornton, Clarkson, William Carey and Thomas Scott, were all men of strong Puritan convictions. It was mainly the same men again who were the supporters of Hannah More, the Evangelical churchwoman, in her pioneer efforts for Village Schools, while we only have to come down another generation to find that it was the Puritan churchman, Lord Shaftesbury, whose noble efforts were successful in overthrowing the worst evils of a system of industrial slavery which existed in our mines and factories. Again it was the Puritan North which was so strongly opposed to slavery in the American Civil War. Coming to modern times we see the Puritan spirit of righteousness exemplified in a strenuous opposition to all forms of injustice and evil. The agitation for the protection of the Native races against European cruelty and exploitation, the crusade against the Opium Traffic and the Drink Traffic, have all been carried on mainly, although not exclusively, by Puritan Evangelicals, both churchmen and nonconformists. *They* have been the pioneers, even if others have loyally aided their efforts. We might multiply other evidence and cite the case of a Barnardo, a Puritan churchman, as the pioneer in rescue work amongst orphan children, or a Puritan churchwoman, like Agnes Weston, in her work amongst British Bluejackets.

Certainly Puritanism as an organized and definite political party system no longer exists, since all parties now contain men of Puritan principles, but its spirit and influence remain and are far-reaching, even if not as great as they were in the seventeenth century. Its ideals are the same, the ideals of purity and righteousness, and they lie at the basis of all our social reforms. Could we find a better standard for a truly Christian democracy to aim at than that

contained in the advice Cromwell gave to the Parliament after the Battle of Dunbar? "Own your authority," he urges, "and improve it to curb the proud and the insolent such as would disturb the tranquillity of England, though under what specious pretences soever. Relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of the poor prisoners in England. Be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions, and if there be anyone that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a Commonwealth" (*Letters and Speeches*, 217).

It may be that at the moment, as a reaction from the horrors of a world war, an anti-Puritan spirit of materialism, indifference and mere selfish pleasure-seeking is predominant in our midst, but this should only constitute an urgent call to rally the forces making for righteousness to mould and influence our national life and especially our great political parties. It should constitute a call for another Puritan revival without the narrowness of the first, for it is the strenuous, serious, godly spirit of the Puritan which will always be the leaven that will purify and preserve our national character. Such a revival should naturally begin by a real union of all Christian forces and Churches, and especially of those possessing a common Puritan ancestry, whose fundamental principles were first enunciated, or rather reasserted, at the Reformation. We may thank God and take courage that Puritanism still lives in this twentieth century and will always continue to live so long as pure, primitive, Scriptural Christianity lasts. It lives, to quote Canon Flynn's fine description, as "a great force for righteousness, not because in thought and speech and garb it resembles or is a replica of the Puritanism of three hundred years ago, but because it has outgrown all these and adapted itself to the modes and requirements of a new age" (u.s., 38).

A second edition has appeared of the Rev. J. M. Connell's *A Book of Devotional Readings* from the Literature of Christendom (Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd. 5s. net). The selection is excellently made and is arranged in chronological order from the New Testament down to Stopford Brooke from whose sermons a short passage is included in this edition. Some notes and a useful index of authors and subjects are added. It is admirably adapted for private devotional use and for public reading when occasion offers.

Christ The King, A Study of the Incarnation, by K. D. MacKenzie, M.A. (S.P.C.K. 1s. 6*d*.), is one of "The Churchman's Popular Library" series. It presents an account of Christ with special reference to the special problems which have been raised in recent years, and though brief is clear except on the meaning of "the Eucharistic presence" which the author seems to imply is to be found in the elements of the Sacrament.