



A Sermon to Commemorate Our Spiritual Heritage
Sunday AM, 8/25/2019

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Act of Uniformity (1559) prescribed that any minister who refused to conform to the *Book of Common Prayer* by St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24, 1662) should be ejected from the Church of England, following the changes after the restoration to power of Charles II. The number of ministers ejected was over 2,000 including some well-known Puritans such as Richard Baxter, Edmund Calamy the Elder, John Flavel, Thomas Brooks, Thomas Manton, and Thomas Watson. Although there had already been ministers outside the established church, the Great Ejection created an abiding concept of non-conformity. Strict religious laws left a substantial section of English society excluded from public affairs and university degrees for a century and a half.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Puritan - (1) a member of a group of English Protestants of the late 16th and 17th centuries who regarded the Reformation of the Church of England under Elizabeth as incomplete and sought to simplify and regulate forms of worship, (2) one who practices or preaches a more rigorous or professedly purer moral code than that which prevails

Dissenter - (1) one who refuses to accept the doctrines or usages of an established or a national church, especially a Protestant who dissents from the Church of England, (2) a Nonconformist

Nonconformist - a Protestant who did not "conform" to the governance and usages of the established Church of England.

A SERMON BY THOMAS LYE (preached on 8/17/662 at All Hallows - London)

Introduction: "I am apt to think I could do anything for this loving congregation, only I cannot sin. But since, beloved, the sentence has gone out against us that we that cannot subscribe must not subsist, this is the last day that is prefixed to us to preach. I shall now speak to you (God assisting me), if my passions will give me leave, just as if I would speak if I were immediately to die."

Text: "Therefore hearken, 'my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.'" (Philippians 4:1)

Outline:

I. A Melting Appellation: "my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for."

First, *the matter of the duty: stand*, stand it out, stand fast.

II. A Serious Exhortation: "so stand fast in the Lord."

Secondly, *the manner of the duty: Stand fast in the Lord*; stand in the Lord's strength, and in the Lord's cause. To stand in your own strength would be the ready way to fall; and to stand in your own cause, for your own fancy, would be the ready way to expose yourselves to all manner of temptations.

Conclusion: "You may say, what shall I do in order to stand?"

- 1) "Make certain you are not **light and proud Christians** (do not then spend the strength of your zeal for your religion in censuring others).
 - 2) "You must beware of being **loose Christians**. (If ungodliness is in the heart, it is no difficult thing for error to get into the head.)
 - 3) "Again, take heed of being **worldly Christians**.
 - 4) "Take heed also of being **hypocritical Christians**.
 - 5) "Take heed of being **venturous and God-tempting Christians**. (What is that? When do I tempt God? I tempt God when I run into a pest-house, and say God will preserve me from the plague.)"
- "I have not spoken one word that I remember, which I would not have said to you if I had been a-dying, and called to go to God as soon as I had gone out of the pulpit. The God of peace be with you."

THE NONCONFORMIST CATECHISM (first published in 1773; key points from the summary statement found in article #61)

- 1) That the Church of England is **imperfectly reformed from Popery**, and still bears **too strong resemblance to the Church of Rome**.
- 2) That therefore it behooves those who have power in the Church to exert themselves in order to **carry on the reformation**: and endeavor to perfect what the first reformers so nobly begun, with greater difficulty and hazard than their successors have in the present day any reason to fear; **so that the Church of England may truly and consistently call herself Protestant**.
- 3) That...it is **the indispensable duty** of those who are dissatisfied with them, and whose consciences would be uneasy with conformity, in a peaceable manner to dissent.
- 4) That the Nonconformists ought to be exceedingly thankful to God for the liberty they enjoy of separating from a National Church, which they think so corrupt, and of worshiping God in places of their own, in a manner agreeable to the dictates of their consciences, and as they think, to the rules of God's holy Word....
- 5) That they ought to be steadfast in their adherence to the cause of Nonconformity, zealous in maintaining the great principles of it, and active to support and increase it by all such methods as are consistent with peace, liberty, and charity; still making it to appear that **their zeal is principally directed to the cause of practical godliness....**

TIMELINE

- 1530 Henry VIII leads Parliament in break with Roman Catholic Church and becomes 'supreme head of the Church of England'
- 1547 Edward VI becomes king and advances Protestantism
- 1549 First version of *Book of Common Prayer* published and the first "Act of Uniformity" requires its use for public worship
- 1553 Mary Tudor ("Bloody Mary") becomes queen and labors to reestablish Roman Catholicism; nearly 300 Protestants are martyred during her reign
- 1558 Elizabeth inherits throne and restores Anglicanism
- 1560 Controversy over clerical vestments is symptom of Puritans' desire for further reformation
- 1563 *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* first published
- 1570 Puritan leader Thomas Cartwright deprived of teaching post at Cambridge for criticizing Anglican liturgy and government
- 1571 Parliament approves *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* stating doctrinal beliefs of English church
- 1583 John Whitgift becomes Archbishop of Canterbury and enforces uniformity in public worship
- 1603 James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England; rejects most Puritan requests for reform included in their "Millenary Petition"
- 1611 King James Version published
- 1616 Galileo prohibited by Catholic Church from further scientific work
- 1620 The "Pilgrims" (Puritan separatist who had fled to the Netherlands, sail to America and found Plymouth Colony; Oliver Cromwell becomes Member of Parliament
- 1625 Charles I becomes King (3/28)
- 1626 Knighthoods for all Englishmen with property over £40 year, to help king's revenue
- 1630 John Winthrop sails to Massachusetts and founds Boston; beginning of "Great Migration" of Puritans to New England
- 1633 William Laud becomes Archbishop of Canterbury; Charles I crowned King of Scotland in Edinburgh
- 1637 Charles I introduces new Prayer Book in Scotland, causes riots
- 1641 House of Commons presents Charles I with *Grand Remonstrance*
- 1642 English Civil War begins (10/23); most Puritans side with Parliament against King Charles I
- 1643 Parliament calls assembly of Puritan leaders, who produce *Westminster Confession of Faith*
- 1645 Archbishop William Laud executed by Puritan-run Parliament; formation of New Model Army
- 1649 King Charles I beheaded (1/30); England declared a commonwealth
- 1653 Cromwell declared Lord Protector (12/16)
- 1655 Cromwell dissolves Parliament and prohibits Anglican services
- 1657 Creation of new House of Lords increases Cromwell's power
- 1658 Oliver Cromwell dies (9/3); his son, Richard Cromwell, becomes Protector
- 1659 Richard Cromwell resigns
- 1659 "The Act of Uniformity" (characterized as "moderate Protestantism")
- 1660 Charles II returns; John Bunyan imprisoned (not released for 12 years); Great Plague kills nearly 70,000 in London
- 1661 "First Conventicle Act" - fines, imprisonment, or banishment imposed for unauthorized religious assembly
- 1662 The Great Ejection, AKA Black Bartholomew's Day (over 2000 Puritan clergy expelled from their churches)
- 1665 "Five Mile Act" - no nonconformist allowed within 5 miles of any town or meeting place; Great Fire of London (9/2-6); France and Dutch declare war on England; the "Great Plague of London" killed 100,000 people over a period of 18 months
- 1672 "Declaration of Indulgence" (3/15) suspended penal laws against nonconformists
- 1685 Charles's Catholic brother James II takes throne; persecution of nonconformists intensifies
- 1689 Glorious Revolution: William and Mary become king and queen of England; the *Act of Toleration* grants freedom of worship to Nonconformists

LESSONS FOR US TODAY:

A. Several of the issues that led to the Great Ejection we hold as fundamental principles as Baptists:

- 1) soul liberty
- 2) the separation of church and state
- 3) the autonomy of the local church
- 4) a regenerate, baptized church membership

B. Other emphases of the Nonconformists are truths that we hold along with other Bible-believing Christians:

- 1) a high value placed on theology
- 2) the importance of preaching
- 3) the essential practice of consistent church discipline
- 4) personal piety

EDMUND CALAMY'S PRAYER AT ALDERMANBURY