

*The Puritan authors represented in this reader are: John Preston on natural theology, John Jewel on Scripture, Stephen Charnock on God, Thomas Manton on man and sin, James Ussher on Christ, William Perkins on salvation, John Owen on atonement, Samuel Hopkins on regeneration, George Downname on justification, John Bunyan on sanctification.*

This article seeks to develop a Puritan theology of prayer from the book, *The Valley of Vision*: What was their method? And what was their content? Each question will be answered from a study of *The Valley of Vision*. Through this, it will be clear that the Puritans built their prayer life upon a proper view and understanding of God and His Word. As one reads *The Valley of Vision*, it becomes clear that their main motivation to pray was the glory of God. They realized that they could not glorify God on their own, therefore, they sought him earnestly in prayer. Specifically, they sought the glory of God in both the edification of the church and the salvation of sinners. Therefore, the greatest privilege and blessing for a person is to have personal communion with God. As a result, the Puritans sought God for this reality, focusing heavily on God building, strengthening, purifying, and glorifying his church. Thus, the Puritans were motivated to rely upon God in prayer and resist the inner tendency to rely upon human ability. They knew that apart from Christ and his Spirit they could do nothing. This realization of their utter dependency upon God, for even the daily tasks of the Christian life, drove them to their knees in prayer. The Puritans knew that to grow in grace, they must first go to the God of grace. Secondly, the Puritans were motivated to pray by seeing the outward needs of the world. The Puritans prayers highlighted the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Since Scripture molded their prayers, the motivation of their prayers was often evangelistic: Therefore, we have seen that the two primary motivations for prayer in the Puritan era were the edification of the church individually and corporately and the salvation of sinners. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, and as a result, he gave them a pattern to follow Luke 11:1-4. This shows the importance of addressing God properly in prayer, as one focuses on his Divine Character and being. The Puritans would often take an attribute of God and worship him for who he is. The prayers often began with large thoughts about God, i. He is the caring and intimate, transcendent, holy, and separate God. There is none like him. A primary focus of the Puritans was to look inwardly on their own sinfulness and weakness and see the necessary need for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the prayers of the Puritans were often clothed with a confession of sin and pleas for cleansing and sustaining grace. The Puritans recognized their own inability to overcome the temptations and snares of daily life. The Promises of God Secondly, the Puritans were famous for turning the promises of God into prayers and firing them back at God. Though no Scriptures were specifically addressed in *The Valley of Vision*, one can see that the prayers of the Puritans were deeply rooted in the promises of God. Thou hast spoken them, and they shall be done, commanded, and they shall come to pass. They were confident that God is the unchangeable God. He alone is faithful to his word. What he has promised, that he will do. Thus, the promises of God gave the Puritans an unwavering confidence in their prayers. As they prayed through Scripture, they knew that they were praying according to the will of God. Whatever occasion, the Puritans were resolved to go to the Scriptures, find a promise of God, and pray it back to him. Therefore, we have seen the two primary methods of prayer for the Puritans. First, they made sure that they followed the pattern that the Lord Jesus laid out in Scripture. Then, they prayed the promises of God with confidence. As one scans through *The Valley of Vision*, it becomes clear that there are many different categories of prayer, i. However, to understand the content of their prayers, we must ask the following questions: Who is the source of the prayer? To whom are their prayers addressed to? What can we learn from them concerning God and man? We will seek to answer these questions in this portion of the paper. To begin, the source of their prayers is God himself. The only way that a Christian can pray is in the strength and aid of the Holy Spirit. Thus, one must be born-again if they are to pray to God. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. If we are to pray, it must be by the grace of God working within us by the Spirit. Next, it is important to note that the Puritans poured out their hearts to God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ in the strength of the Holy Spirit. The Puritans understood that each person

within the Godhead is actively involved in prayer. However, the Puritans primarily addressed and spoke to God the Father in prayer through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, they knew that they were coming to God through the Lord Jesus Christ with the help of the Spirit of God. For example, one Puritan prayed: Finally, the Puritans can teach us two things concerning God and man. First, we see that there was an expression of hope in their prayers. The Puritans knew of their own sinfulness and inability to please God apart from his grace. In many cases, their prayers were heavy and sorrowful over their own sin. Though downcast, the Puritans lifted their eyes and looked toward the all-gracious God who can provide for all their needs in Christ Jesus. Despite suffering, the Puritans maintained an optimistic view of the end times. The trials and persecutions that they faced did not make them despair but gave them a constant hope for better days ahead. The Puritans understood that God still has work to do both in the church and in the world. They knew that this work is accomplished through the ordinary means of grace, i. Therefore, the Puritans looked forward to that final day when sin would reign no more, and they would be with Christ in glory. This eschatological hope kept the Puritans focused in their prayer and devotional life. As a result, they confidently lifted their prayers to the throne of grace and worked hard at promoting the gospel from sea to sea. If the Puritans could be given one characteristic, it would be that they were great men of prayer. This article has sought to develop a Puritan theology of prayer. Though they suffered much, they had an eternal outlook on life. They knew they served the all-gracious God who is faithful to all that he has promised in his word. Any Christian would do well to study the spiritual life of the Puritans. It is my prayer that God would bring us back to the simplicity of the Puritans Spiritual life, i. *The Valley of Vision: Banner of Truth, The Work of The Spirit. Vol 4 of The Works of John Owen. Banner of Truth, , Banner of Truth, , vii.*

**Chapter 2 : A Puritan Theology and Approach to Prayer**

*Shelves: systematic-theology, puritan What an outstanding introduction to those who in the truest Christian humility, stand historically as godly giants of the Faith. Sit at their feet as they open God's Word and reveal Jesus Christ to us.*

There is no new theology. There are new books published every month. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance c. Arguments for the Existence of God Short Study: Understanding the Atonement Short Study: Discussion of the Sacraments Short Study: Middle Ages refers to the development of theology during the dark ages to the time of the Reformation. The term Renaissance refers to designate the literary and artistic revival in the fourteenth century. The period under consideration gives rise to two of the most important intellectual movements in the history of thought: An understanding of both of these movements demonstrates their intricate nature to the rise of the Reformation. Many humanists used this term as a negative connotation toward the Middle Ages in general. It is both pejorative and imprecise for a number of reasons, but the historical theologian cannot help but use it. It may be defined as the period between which placed a hearty emphasis on the rational justification of religious beliefs, and the systematic presentation of those beliefs. Scholasticism, then, does not refer to a specific system of beliefs, but to a particular way of systematizing theological ideas. Types of scholasticism range from realism where concepts actually have their foundation in the supernatural realm to nominalism which focuses in on the particulars, not the universal, nature of a thing. Two major schools emerged from these ideas – Thomism following Aquinas and Scotism following Duns Scotus. The term *via moderna* the modern way is the best way of depicting nominalism for modern scholars. This ideology made many inroads to the European universities and tended to be Pelagian in nature. One of the strongholds of the modern way was the University of Oxford, but also its rebuttal is seen from men like Bradwardine. Humanism also emerged later in the Middle Ages. Today this term means that which is secular, or that which is opposed to God, and the existence of God. In the time of the Renaissance this is not what it meant. Humanism seemed to be a reaction against scholasticism. They were enamored with the promotion of eloquence, but it also embraced a heterogeneous nature encompassing everything from Platonic views to Aristotelian. Humanism was essentially a cultural program, which appealed to classical antiquity as a model of eloquence. It was more concerned with how ideas were obtained and expressed rather than the actual substance of those ideas. This humanism affected various countries and key figures in those countries. One of the most significant movements to emerge during the Middle Ages was Monasticism. It began in the remote areas of Egypt and eastern Syria. Pachomius built an early monastery during This monastery created a pattern by which other monasteries would later develop. Members agreed to submit themselves to a common life that was regulated by an Abbot who ruled over them. The physical structure of the monastery was more like a fortress than a home. By the fourth century these monasteries had been established in many locations in the Christian east, especially in Syria and Asia Minor. By the fifth century many of these communities had become established in Italy, Spain and Gaul. Augustine of Hippo established two monasteries in North Africa during Benedict of Nursia c. They emphasized a unconditional following to Christ, regular corporate and private prayer, and the reading of Scripture. These monasteries were centers for theological activity and are important to historical Christianity in the transmission and study of theology and biblical texts. He was born into a wealthy family, taken by bandits as a captive during a raiding party and sold into slavery in Ireland. Here he discovered the basics of the Christian faith, and then after being released from captivity six years later, desired to return to Ireland to evangelize the country. In Ireland many monasteries arose that were centers of missionary activity. Men like Brandon died c. Iona became an epicenter for missionary activity and further training for the mission field. Celtic Christianity had stopped its growth and began to decline. This marks the dawn of a new age called the Middle Ages or the age of intellectual consolidation. By the eleventh century there was a significant social and political stability which emerged within this geographic area. The Byzantium kingdom which centered in the city of Constantinople located in modern Turkey was deeply rooted in the writings of the patristic fathers and would later serve as a hotbed for theological thought. The Caliphate, and Islamic region, continued to see the growth of the Islamic nation, but was finally halted by the Moors in

Spain in the final decade of the fifteenth century and the defeat of the Islamic armies outside Vienna in 1526. An event that was catastrophic for the history of the united church took place in 1054. The Catholic Church the one true church and the Orthodox church now claiming the right to being the one true church broke apart and was never united again. As a matter of fact, the tension was so great at this time that there was little, if any, theological interaction from that time forward between the Western church and the Eastern theologians who broke away. Once the Middle Ages emerged, there were key theologians and scholars who marked that era: Anselm of Canterbury c. 1033-1109. He migrated to Normandy in 1042, entering the famous monastery of Bec, becoming its prior in 1049 and its abbot in 1063. In 1093 he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. He wrote the Proslogion, which purports the ontological argument for God. It demonstrates that the Christian Gospel is rational and can be shown to be rational. Among his many contributions to the development of medieval theology, his most noted is his emphasis upon the subjective aspects of the atonement. Victor of St. Quindus in Paris around 1100. His most important work is *de sacramentis Christianae fidei* which means, On the sacrament of the Christian Faith. It shows the awareness of the new theological debates that were beginning to develop at this time. The work is divided into three parts: William of Ockham c. 1287-1347. The principle of parsimony taught that the simplest answer is most likely, and so cut through a great amount of theological and philosophical hypotheses. Erasmus of Rotterdam c. 1466-1536. Though Erasmus was not a Protestant, he was greatly influential upon Protestantism in a number of ways. One of these was his translation of the Greek New Testament. Secondly, he was able to produce many of the scholarly patristic works, especially those of Augustine. He also wrote the *Enchiridion*, which became a bestseller, and began reforming echoes at Zurich and Wittenberg. In such influences it is said that Luther hatched the egg that Erasmus laid. There were a number of key theological developments that took place within the framework of the Middle Ages. First, there was the consolidation of the Patristic Heritage. Secondly, the exploration of the role of reason in theology took a turn to systematize and expand what Christian theology was all about. Thirdly, there was the increasing development of theological systems as a whole emerging. Sixthly, and very importantly, a return to the original sources had begun *ad fontes* in order to think and write critically on the source documents of a given text. Seventhly, there came about, as a result of the *ad fontes* trend, a critique of the Vulgate translation of the Bible the Latin vulgate was a translation done of the Bible, and of the apocryphal books by Jerome, and used heavily by the Roman Church. In the Eastern church two notations are of importance: Emperor Leo III c. 680-741. If this definition is correct, Anselm argues, then this implies the existence of God. If He does not exist, then that would contradict that the reality of God is greater than the idea of God. If God exists, then the reality behind that is that one could not think of anything greater than God, and the opposite would be self-contradictory one could not think of something not as great and not have God exist. If this definition of God exists in the human mind, then the corresponding reality must also exist. A Benedictine monk named Gaunilo attempted to make a response to Anselm. He wrote *The Reply on Behalf of the Fool* that says just because we have an idea of something, that does not necessitate the existence of it. If one were to have an idea of a dollar bill in their hands, or a thousand of them, that does not guarantee that reality corresponds to that thought. Aquinas said that if something exists, then something exists necessarily. He worked from the angle of necessary being in order to demonstrate the order and need for a Creator of the universe based on order. Since the cosmos is in motion, there must have been something that started that motion. Aquinas argued that everything is moved by something, except the first cause of the movement that is now in motion. Duns Scotus and William of Ockham both offered rebuttals to these arguments by making the following points: These arguments do not demonstrate that God continues to exist. Some thought that since 1 Peter 3: 18-20, Anselm, though, taught something quite different. He would not concede that the devil has rights over anyone, and that Christ never went to hell to fight with the devil. God created humanity who fell, Christ came to save them, and therefore Christ does this by His death on the cross. Aquinas believed this also but taught that the work of Christ was a satisfaction for those for which He came to die. The satisfaction offered by his humanity could be conceived as greater than the sin He was satisfying since the mode of forgiveness is the righteousness and goodness of God in the act. Discussion of the Sacraments A sacrament is a sign.

**Chapter 3 : Introduction to Puritan Theology: A Reader by Ed Hindson**

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Leave a comment Part 1: The church needs to rediscover the theology of the Puritans, especially in the light of a postmodern world, which has no absolute truths and is clearly at loggerheads with Christianity. We will begin our discussion with a number of definitions, namely what would be an accurate definition of Puritanism, and secondly what is understood by the term postmodernism? Definition of Puritanism Firstly, it must be noted that Puritanism is not a strict religious system of legalistic laws which borders on Christian fanaticism. Beeke and Pederson The never tired of proclaiming the electing grace of God, the dying love of Jesus Christ, and the applicatory work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of sinners. They therefore focused on plain and earnest preaching, liturgical reform, and spiritual brotherhood. So they excelled at preaching the gospel, probing the conscience, awakening the sinner, calling him to repentance and faith, leading him to Christ, and schooling him in the way of Christ. They developed from Scripture a careful description of what a Christian ought to be in his inward life before God, and in all his actions and relationships in this life, at home, in the church, at work, and in society. Therefore in this paper the term Puritan is used as a combination of the above points. The need for biblical preaching and the teaching of sound Reformed doctrine. The need for biblical, personal piety that stresses the work of the Holy Spirit in the faith and life of the believer. The need to restore biblical simplicity in liturgy, vestments, and church government, so that a well-ordered church life would promote the worship of Triune God as prescribed in his Word. Puritanism thus was completely Christocentric in its proclamation and in its discipleship of believers. It was thoroughly pneumatological Holy Spirit in its application for the transformed inner life of the believer. Lastly, the aim of Puritan theology was to discipleship believers into mature faith. And here I define mature faith as a lifestyle of doxology; progressive growth in intimacy with Jesus; and the fostering of mature faith in existential crises. With this brief introduction towards a definition of Puritanism we turn our attention to an examination of the meaning of postmodernism. Postmodernism What is postmodernism? And more importantly can Christian theology, with particular reference to Puritan theology, embrace a postmodern worldview? We now turn to answer these two fundamental questions. Defining a postmodern worldview There is no denying that we live in a postmodern world. However, defining postmodernism is profoundly complex and ambiguous. This is due to the many cross currents shaping the postmodern climate. Postmodernists deconstruct metanarratives worldviews so that no one particular belief is more true or believable than another. Therefore one can argue that postmodernism does not have a worldview. This spiritual perspective undoubtedly has serious implications for theology which will be discussed further on. Metanarratives and deconstruction The postmodern writers apply the critical method of deconstruction to texts. Deconstruction declares that the identity and intention of the author of a text are irrelevant to the interpretation of the text. Two general principles of this approach to the reading of texts are highlighted McGrath This means that all interpretations are equally valid or equally meaningless. No metanarrative is large enough to include the experiences and realities of all people and the only purpose of the metanarrative is to legitimize the power structures that marginalize these experiences. Thus the metanarratives of redemption history in Jesus is rejected. The problem with deconstruction is that very little is left afterwards. Middleton and Walsh As already noted Neuger Bidwell therefore proposes a theological anthropology which is more adequate to the postmodern world. He argues that by adopting such an approach pastoral care and counselling can nurture healthy, integrative, and maturing Christians in a postmodern culture. This change was made to accommodate spiritual pluralism. In my opinion theology and in particular pastoral theology cannot embrace a postmodern epistemology for the following reasons: The Value of Reading the Puritans for Spiritual Formation The discussion thus far argues for a strong case for the reintroduction of Puritan theology in a postmodern world. The praxis of postmodernism is crouching at the door of the church, ready to indoctrinate her and lead her away from the authority of Scripture. They were shaped by Scripture. The Puritans loved, lived, and breathed Scripture, relishing the power of the Spirit that accompanied the Word. The

Puritans called believers to be Word-centered in faith and practice. The Puritans did this by addressing the mind, confronting the conscience, and wooing the heart. The Puritans refused to set mind and heart against each other but taught that knowledge was the soil in which the Spirit planted the seed of regeneration. The Puritans were masters at naming specific sins, then asking questions to press home conviction of those sins. They focused on Christ. We learn from the Puritans that we need affliction to humble us Deut 8: They show how to live in two worlds. They show us true spirituality. The Puritans promoted the authority of Scripture, biblical evangelism, church reform, the spirituality of law, spiritual warfare against indwelling sin, the filial fear of God, the art of meditation, the dreadfulness of hell and the glories of heaven. Conclusion It is my conviction that the church needs to return to the theology of the Puritans, even though we live in a postmodern world, which advocates no absolute truths. The theology of the Puritans will keep us Christ-centered; Holy Spirit sustained and inspired; Word focused; discipleship focused in good theology; and is do doing it will raise up a church that will not comprise the Word of God in the face of postmodernism. An Anglican to Remember – William Perkins: The Genius of Puritanism. A passion for truth. Guide to contemporary culture. Postmodern spirituality, political economy, and art. State University of New York Press. The end of truth? In DuToit, C W ed. University of South Africa, 28 – Facing the postmodern scalpel. Christian apologetics in the postmodern world. Britain and America, ed. Religious belief in a postmodern era: Journal of Pastoral Theology, 8, , 1 – An introduction to postmodern thought and its implications for theology. Journal of Pastoral Theology 8, , 15 – Maturing religious experience and the postmodern self. Pastoral Psychology, 49 no 4 Mr , – Star Trek and the next generation: Ons taak in postmodernistiese tyd: Die Kerkbode, 17 November,

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