

the Westminster Confession of Faith, that great Puritan emblem, we read, "God alone is Lord of the Conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men." The Puritan regarded the eternal laws of God, as sufficient for his being, and upon this conviction was founded his ideal Liberty. He had liberty of action. Unfettered by ecclesiastical law and without bondage to tradition, he was free to advance and seek the best things. He only is free who is a free man of the Lord; and he is a slave who serves any other law but God's. Thus their ideal of Law coming from God, and the conscientious and spiritual interpretation thereof, made them free. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Hence the Puritan ideal was freedom from all formalism, all insincerity, all error. It will ever be the foe of prescribed forms and imposed ceremonies. It will ever exalt the intellectual, moral, and æsthetic features of life. The Puritan spirit will work out a religious organization which shall be a model of beauty, harmony, and grandeur, and a wideness of liberty which shall cause the nations to smile upon one another, and unite more fully in the holy destinies of peace.

Again, the Puritan principle of Obedience gives him his ideal of Life. All men are born to be servants; but to serve sin, to serve self, to be the slave of social and religious dogmatism, that is not liberty, that is not life. Life was to the ideal Puritan a battle against indwelling sin, both in man and in nation, and the cultivation of a "graceful temper and gracious character." To know, serve and enjoy God was his ideal of a happy life.

This ideal leads to a large and well-rounded conception of national life. "How shall I best serve my country?" was to the Puritan an important and practical question. No truer expression can be found than in the life of him who asked, not with utilitarian selfishness, "How can I preserve my eyes?" but chose rather to live in blindness and serve his country well. *Milton*, with heroic zeal, stood for the principles of Puritanism in a time when princes and prelates threatened their speedy extinction, because he believed that they alone could save his country.

He regarded the British nation as "a strong man, full of life, awakening in body and in mind," and conceived of every nation as being made of a civil and religious element, as independent as the mind and body of a man. If this ideal were carried out more generally to-day, discussion on the relation of Church and State would become a thing of the past. Give us the man who stands as a responsible unit between his nation and his God, and we shall have the ideal community,—one which shall measure up to the standard of *Milton*, "a community living together in the practice of virtue, the worship of God, and the pursuit of truth." Thus did *Milton* anticipate with prophetic vision the upward tendencies of the nineteenth century.