

These were the men ushered in by the discords of the 17th Century. The Puritan spirit began to rise in 1559, when Queen Elizabeth and her Parliament sought to compel the observance of the customs of the established church, and to enslave the people to its popish impurities, by passing the infamous Act of Conformity. It was a spirit and a power which resisted the combined attacks of monarchs, princes and prelates, and changed the whole aspect of British thought and life.

It was useless to resist. The power increased, the fight waxed fiercer and fiercer, until ere long like pent-up steam, the indomitable life of Puritanism burst the bands of despotism and stood free,—rejoicing in its freedom, and strong with a religious energy which has animated all those systems in accord with, and devastated all those opposed to it.

It was the spirit which has made England and her colonies the grandest nation in the world to-day, and the Anglo-Saxon people wherever they are found the truest and wisest of men.

The history of this movement is a history of fierce struggle. Puritanism is rich in martyrs. It has gained its hard won victories with the blood and nerves of its noblest and best. But there is the history of the world's grandest and most fruitful reformations.

It is a history of men of principle. "What deep joy fills the mind," says Channing, "when throughout apparently inextricable confusion, he can trace some great principle that governs all events and that they all show forth." These men penetrating the conditions of life, grasped and held firmly the great underlying principle, regarding it as their master because it was right,—regarding it as more important than any other consideration because it was noblest.

The rock, the citadel of Puritanism, is Law. Let the Puritan see in any condition of things, no matter how complex, the divine law of its existence, and he is at once its devoted servant. He will sacrifice his comfort, his prosperity, his life, in his devotion to divine law.

This fundamental principle of Law implies the three following conditions, viz:—First,—The authorship of Law. Second,—Obedience. Third,—Faith in its adaptability and efficiency. Building upon these as a foundation the Puritan has set before his imagination some of the highest ideals ever entertained in the hearts of men.

The principle that God is the author of all law gives him his ideal Liberty; the principle of Obedience gives him his ideal Life; and the principle of faith gives him his ideal Progress.

John Wycliffe, so often called "the Morning Star of the Reformation," took his stand upon the principle of the supreme authority of the Scriptures. He joined issue on the question of the authority of the Scriptures *versus* that of the Prelates. In