

**A Review of “Who Are The Puritans? ...And What Do They Teach?”
by Erroll Hulse (Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2000), p/bk, 220 pages (\$14.99)**

The writings of the 17th century English Puritans were largely neglected for much of the 20th century. Not so now. Extensive republishing of Puritan material by the Banner of Truth and more recently Soli Deo Gloria here in the US has made these mighty works available once more to a wider audience. This book will urge many to delve into the wealth of juicy material that is once again available.

The title sums up the entire book. Divided neatly into three parts, the first two answer the question, “Who are the Puritans”, and the third answers the question, “what do they teach?” The book is very attractively presented; the text is laid out in a variety of different fonts and is well illustrated. Written in a very readable style, it should appeal to a broad readership, perhaps especially a younger audience than a book on this subject may normally reach.

The author expresses his aim in the introduction as follows: *“I want to create enthusiasm for the Puritans in order to profit from their practical example and benefit from their unique balance of doctrine, experience and practice...Teaching which engenders holy living and stability is vastly needed. Historically, the Puritan epoch is best able to supply this need for they were strongest where the churches in general are weakest today”*. Hulse persuasively argues that the Puritans’ writings are ideally suited to the present-day trends of Postmodernism, Neo-orthodoxy, Fundamentalism, The New Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, Shallow Evangelism, Reconstructionism, Broad Evangelicalism, and Hyper-Calvinism.

Part One is entitled “The Story of the Puritans”, and provides an overview of the history of the Puritan movement. Some helpful timelines and illustrations guide us through the development of the movement from before the Reformation to the decline of the movement after the Restoration of Charles II.

Part Two focuses in on the lives of 24 individual Puritans. Some are familiar names to many of us – Thomas Watson, John Owen, John Bunyan, and Richard Baxter. Others are less known, such as the Baptists Knollys and Jessey. Each biography is brief (approx. 1 page) and contains a portrait and a bibliography of their books that are currently in print.

Part Three is perhaps the most important section of the book. Entitled “Help from the Puritans”, it makes up one half of the book, and supplies many quotations from the Puritans on many subjects that are of particular importance in our day. These include: The Puritans’ stable doctrine of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, the Recovery of the Lord’s Day, Marriage and the family, a Robust Doctrine of Assurance, Eschatological hope, The Primacy of Expository preaching, the Reality of Sin. These mini-essays provide a wealth of helpful material.

Finally there are six interesting appendices on related topical and historical subjects, such as, “Were the Puritans Narrow-minded Bigots?”, “The Reformation in Scotland”, “The Ongoing Influence of the Puritans”. An extensive bibliography is also provided for further research.

I would particularly recommend this book to teens and to home-schooling parents as a useful history textbook covering the Puritan period from the Reformation to the Restoration, but also to any reader who would like an introduction to this important period and her uniquely gifted preachers.

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