

Reformation
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1. To encourage *reformation* in the local Christian churches worldwide,
 2. To promote the cause of *revival* and spiritual awakening through prayer and the provision of resources to aid Christian leaders.
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Information

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The conviction of the staff and editors of the *Reformation & Revival Journal* is that awakening, of the kind seen in the First Great Awakening in this country, wedded to the doctrinal concerns of the historic Protestant Reformation as expressed in the terms *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*, is needed in our generation.

The views expressed in this publication should be considered as the personal opinions of the authors and are not to be taken as an official editorial perspective.

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Table of Contents

Reformation & Revival Journal

<i>Editor's Introduction</i>	9
John H. Armstrong	
<i>The Story of the Puritans</i>	13
Erroll Hulse	
<i>Why Read the Puritans Today?</i>	55
Don Kistler	
<i>Reading and Hearing the Word in a Puritan Way</i>	67
Joel R. Beeke and Ray B. Lanning	
<i>The Liberated Puritan</i>	77
Doug Wilson	
<i>The Perils of Puritanism</i>	83
Thomas N. Smith	
<i>Puritans Living in Relationship to Affliction, Desertion, and Sin</i>	101
Joel R. Beeke	
<i>Reading the Best in Puritan Literature: A Modern Bibliography</i>	117
Joel R. Beeke	
<i>Book Reviews</i>	159

Theologian and contemporary author James I. Packer has written:

Horse racing is said to be the sport of kings. The sport of slinging mud has, however, a wider following. Pillorying the Puritans, in particular, has long been a popular pastime on both sides of the Atlantic, and most people's image of Puritanism still has on it much disfiguring dirt that needs to be scraped off.¹

In recent years there has been, happily, a wonderful recovery of interest in the writings and lives of the Puritans, both of the English and American variety. Hundreds of reprints have been issued, scores of modern studies written, and conferences on Puritan thought and practice now abound. As recently as the 1960s the evangelical world knew next to nothing of these Gospel worthies of the seventeenth century. Now, a few decades later, translations of Puritan works are even available in numerous languages, making this rich mine of pastoral and devotional wisdom accessible to millions of potential Christian readers.

From the very beginning of this publication (1992) the editors have planned a special Puritanism issue. Our goal in addressing this theme is to introduce the Puritans and Puritanism to those who have never read, or perhaps read very little, from the Puritan treasures now readily available as reprints. We also hope to challenge the longtime reader of the Puritans. Our task will not be easy to accomplish.

One of the first problems we faced in addressing this theme and in finding capable writers was, "How can we do justice to such a big and important theme within our normal space limitations?" Since we couldn't reach our editorial goals within our usual space limitations we decided to expand the coverage of the theme into two issues. We know

this may disappoint some but we felt our editorial goals were more important than our advertising.²

Second, we wished to provide an issue that might meet a present need for introductory material on Puritanism that would give an overview of this movement, of the key figures and the important ideas. We hope that pastors, teachers and even professors will find this issue, and the sequel to follow, useful for class work and background material.

Third, we knew from the beginning that no such publication could address a diverse and frequently misunderstood subject without failing to please some readers. We have, therefore, taken our risks and dared to both praise and criticize the Puritans, believing that they were anything but "perfect." We understand and support the modern resurgence of Puritan interest. We also understand that there is the tendency in any reforming period to parrot previous generations, as if they had it just right. The result of this is a loss of discernment and careful thought. We believe that it is necessary to begin to think more clearly in the light of the Puritan context, both religiously and politically, as well as our own. To this end we include in this first of two issues the very helpful article by associate editor Thomas N. Smith titled "The Perils of Puritanism." Let the reader judge if we have come close to the goal in this regard. Either way, we heartily urge your prayerful consideration of these giants of piety who labored for the reforming of the church in their own age. At the same time we urge your continued prayerful concern for the reforming of the church in our dark age. We believe the Puritans have much to say to us that will address our own imbalance if we read them properly. We also believe that merely discovering old paths and treating them as if they were the final word on biblical understanding and application is a serious mistake. Come let us reason together!

Editor

Endnotes:

- 1 Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1986), ix.
- 2 A special note of thanks must be given to three men who have served me, beyond the normal help I receive, in the planning and development of this issue—James I. Packer, Joel Beeke, whose work will be found throughout the two issues, and Don Kistler, who has now reprinted more than one hundred valuable Puritan works for our generation. Thanks to each of you. Your help made these two issues better. The flaws that remain are mine, but your help surely improved the end result.