

1564-1660: The Era of Puritanism

1564	<p>The word "Puritan" appears for the first time. The Puritans are Calvinists, legalists, and name-callers. They are very serious, and oppose most things that are fun for themselves or others. They want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a skilled, educated preaching ministry, based on the Bible• as few ceremonies in church as Biblically possible (no surplice, no signing of the cross)• abolition of the traditional role of bishop, and replacement of the episcopate by a presbyterian system• one legal government church, controlled by Puritans. (Contrast the Separatists.)
1569	Thomas Cartwright of Cambridge outlines the Puritan program.
1575	The "Geneva Bible", an inexpensive edition with Calvinist notes, is published. (Shakespeare quotes this version.)
1581	Robert Browne's "Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Any". This will be the manifesto of the Puritans who found the Massachusetts Bay colony.
1581	Richard Hooker ordained priest; his anti-Puritan book "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity" reflects natural-law and rationalist ideas then popular.
1590	William Shakespeare ridicules Puritans in his characterizations of Falstaff, Malvolio, Flavius, and others.
1593	Puritan assemblies and activities outlawed. A few Separatists are hanged.
1603	Elizabeth I succeeded by James I.
1604	Book of Common Prayer revised. The only change is an expanded catechism. The sacraments are "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace". At the eucharist, "the Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful".
1605	"Gunpowder plot" by Roman Catholic fanatics seeking to blow up Parliament.
1611	King James Version of the Bible. Most of the language is Tyndale's.

1618	James I's "Declaration of Sports" is read in all churches to encourage healthy fun and games on Sundays. This outrages the Puritans.
1622	John Donne, priest and metaphysical poet, becomes Dean of St. Paul's cathedral, London.
1625	James I is succeeded by Charles I; his colorful court fills with refugees, including Roman Catholic counter-reformation types.
1625	Christopher Wren begins rebuilding St. Paul's Cathedral.
1626	Nicholas Ferrar founds religious community of Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire, England.
1628	The narrow-minded William Laud is made archbishop of London. He oversees the persecution of Puritans.
1633	George Herbert's poems published posthumously as "The Temple".
1637	Scottish Prayer Book published. (This is unpopular in Scotland, though it does call priests "presbyters". It will be the basis for the future American Prayer Book.)
1638	The Scots, crying "Popery", excommunicate their bishops. This results in war.
1640	Charles I calls Parliament to approve funds for the war with Scotland; Parliament instead raises an army against the king. In the civil wars that follow, Oliver Cromwell leads the "New Model Army" rebels and becomes Lord Protector; John Milton is his Latin Secretary. Puritan morality becomes the law. (Today, Cromwell might be considered a Baptist; he says, sincerely, "I had rather that Mahometanism were permitted among us than that one of God's children should be persecuted.")
1643	Westminster Assembly drafts its "Confession", the major Presbyterian statement of belief.
1645	William Laud is beheaded by the Puritans.
1649	Cromwell and his government behead ("martyr") King Charles I.
1649	"Diggers" (communists), "Levellers" (egalitarians) and "Ranters" (atheists, hedonists) cause problems for the Puritan regime. (The latter are targets of the new "Blasphemy Act".)

[\[Timeline home page\]](#) [\[Previous era: 1517-1564 Reformation\]](#) [\[Next era: 1660 Restoration\]](#)

