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Chapter 1

Historiographical Introduction, Methodology, Hypothesis, and Structure

1.1 Another Book on English Puritanism? Historiographical Justification

Only in the past sixty-five years has the study of English Puritanism gained serious academic credence. Prior to this, popular perceptions of Puritans ranged from admirable to ignoble. In the sixteenth century, John Whitgift, adversary of Elizabethan Puritanism and future Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote that “this name Puritane is very aptly giuen to these men, not because they be pure no more than were the Heretikes called Cathari, but because they think them selues to be mundiores ceteris, more pure than others, as Cathari dyd, and separate them selues from all other Churches and congregations as spotted and defiled.” Thomas Cartwright, the leading Presbyterian of the sixteenth century, rejected “Puritan” and thought that it should be applied only to Anabaptists.

In the seventeenth century, Oliver Ormerod mocked the Puritans in his oft-cited dialogue The Picture of a Puritane (1605). Henry Parker, one of Ormerod’s contemporaries, sought to

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1 Most historians have used “English Puritanism” as a standard reference to this sixteenth and seventeenth-century movement (or series of movements); however, other historians refer to “British Puritanism” or “Dutch Puritanism” or “Scottish Puritanism” or “American Puritanism” or even “Irish Puritanism” to reflect the diversity of thought present within Puritanism and argue for an expansive presence outside England. I refer to “English Puritanism” in its English and British (i.e. international) contexts; that is, I assume that Puritanism was not only an occurrence in England and its colonies but had a strong presence elsewhere, especially in the Netherlands. It is in this sense that I refer to the “Puritan Reformation.” For studies of Puritanism outside of England, see Keith L. Sprunger, Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Leiden: Brill, 1982); Willem op’t Hof, Engelse pietistische geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598-1622 (Rotterdam: Lindenberg, 1987); David George Mullan, Scottish Puritanism, 1590-1638 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Margo Todd, The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 402-412; Janice Knight, Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1994); and Crawford Gribben, “Puritanism in Ireland and Wales,” in The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 159-173. John Coffey has recently questioned the use of “Scottish Puritanism” in “The Problem of Scottish Puritanism, 1590-1638,” in Enforcing the Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, ed. Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 68-90, and Keith Brown has rejected it in “Review of Scottish Puritanism,” Journal of Ecclesiastical History 53 (2002), 396. That the term “Puritan” was applied to the Scottish context by early modernists should neither be overlooked nor exaggerated.


defend his fellow evangelicals from “this detested odious name of Puritan,” by stating that they upheld godliness and morals in the realm. Giles Widdowes observed its ambiguity in 1631 and John Yates found it offensive in 1625, calling for a statute to “define it and punish it.” In the eighteenth century, David Hume called the Puritans “obstinate reformers” and referred to their “wild fanaticism” and “gloomy spirit.” Nineteenth-century Hawthornian biases predominated Victorian studies; so much so, that the classic caricature of the English Puritan throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that of “a gaunt, lank-haired kill-joy, wearing a black steeple-hat, and compounding for sins he was inclined to by damning those to which he had no mind.” Even the great nineteenth-century English poet, Matthew Arnold, used “Puritan” “a term of opprobrium and a powerful cultural weapon...[in a] campaign to replace Christianity with culture.” H. L. Mencken, a twentieth-century satirist, opined that Puritanism was “the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.” George Orwell reiterated these Victorian sentiments in his essay “The English People.” These popular perceptions trace to early modern anti-Puritan biases in Restoration England. Consequently, Puritanism continues

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5 Henry Parker, “A Discourse Concerning Puritans,” in Images of English Puritanism, 164, 166-71. For deeper explorations into Parker, see Michael Mendle, Henry Parker and the English Civil War: The Political Thought of the Public’s "Privado" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Jason Peacey, Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 144-15. Parker’s Discourse is important because, as Catherine Gimelli Martin has observed, “Parker divided the movement into ecclesiastical Puritans...religious Puritans or dogmatic Calvinists; moral Puritans, or scrupulous precisians in conduct; and political Puritans.” Martin, Milton Among the Puritans: The Case for Historical Revisionism (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 61.


See also John W. Beardslee III, ed., Reformed Dogmatics: J. Wollenbius, G. Voetius, and F. Turretin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 279f, where Gisbertus Voetius mentions those who are styled “Precisionists, Puritans, Roundheads, or shorthairs, foolish-wise, joyless, sad-humored, clothed in melancholy, Sabbatarians...salty-sour Zeelanders...etc.”


to mystify modern readers and remains a much-misunderstood aspect of British and American lineage.\textsuperscript{13}

Recent scholarship has come a long way in “rehabilitating” and re-defining the Puritans. As Gordon S. Wakefield wrote in 1957, “No longer can he [the Puritan] be pilloried as the would-be saboteur of the Church of England, the fierce opponent of everything ‘Anglican.’”\textsuperscript{14} Far more complex identities have emerged than the small but assertive early modern “hotter-sort of Protestant” whose aesthetic tastes excluded ceremonies and happy times.\textsuperscript{15} Puritanism could no longer be defined solely in its relation to Anglicanism. Patrick Collinson described the Puritan tradition within the established church as “not alien to the properly ‘Anglican’ character of the English church but...equivalent to the most vigorous and successful of religious tendencies contained within it.”\textsuperscript{16} G. R. Elton observed “that within the Church there existed both high and low streams of opinion, and that at least before the age of [William] Laud these did not represent a conflict between Anglican and Puritan as much as a struggle for ascendancy between two sections of the English Church.”\textsuperscript{17} In fact, Nicholas Tyacke has recently brought early modern “Anglicanism” into question, citing the religious complexities of one of its chief intellectual architects, Lancelot Andrewes.\textsuperscript{18} The “Anglican versus Puritan”

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antithesis, however, still permeates modern understanding of early modern English religious culture. What has supplanted this older consensus is one of a rather robust, early modern “Calvinist consensus” that incorporates a broader spectrum of individuals and thought, including non-Anglicans, which are aptly dubbed “experimental [i.e. experiential] Calvinists.” David C. Steinmetz, however, has cautioned against equating Puritanism with Calvinism since “Calvinism was a more pervasive religious and intellectual movement than Puritanism.” Whether all Puritans were Calvinists, however, has been contested by John Coffey, and others. So while older models for understanding


* David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5. Steinmetz allows for Puritanism as a special type of Calvinism but sees Calvinism as much broader and more encompassing than Puritanism, touching anti-Puritans and Puritans, Anglicans and Dissenters, High Churchmen and Low. Depending on one’s definition of Puritanism, however, one may see strong (if not equal) tendencies towards pervasiveness within Puritanism itself. Cf. Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses* (London: Epworth Press, 1967), 11-21. Also, I agree with Richard A. Muller that given the diversity within Reformed theology and development, it is more accurate to speak of the “Reformed tradition” than of “Calvinism,” though because of the pervasive use of “Calvinism” in scholarship, I have, at times, retained its use. Further, use of the “Reformed tradition” is not without its problems as it less clearly expresses predestinarian motifs. See Richard A. Muller, “John Calvin and Later Calvinism: The Identity of the Reformed Tradition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 130-49.

* While Coffey acknowledges a strong Calvinistic presence among the Puritans, he argues that John Goodwin, a convert to Arminianism, was as firmly within the Puritan tradition as the high Calvinist Samuel Rutherford (thus, both persons reflecting certain polarities within Puritanism). Perhaps a better taxonomy would be “Reformed,” though it is questionable whether Goodwin was “Reformed orthodox.” William den Boer contends that Arminius’s theology “remain well within the scope of Reformed theology.”
the Puritan crisis in the Elizabethan church have moved towards more diverse understandings of these Reformed Protestants, questions still linger as to their precise religious identity or for a more reliable taxonomy that incorporates these diversities. Reflecting on the problem of pluralities in early modern religion, Tracy Fessenden, Nicholas F. Radel, and Magdalena J. Zaborowska made the deconstructionist statement that “there are only Puritans, Puritanisms, and Protestantisms.” Though this observation accurately identifies diverse systems of thought and practice in the early modern period, it does not assess whether there was a unitas in diversitate within Puritanism, nor adequately address confessionality among Puritans.

Since the rise of English Puritan studies in the mid-twentieth century, nearly every facet of Puritanism has been explored, shedding light on numerous problems associated with early modern English religious culture. The most conspicuous result of these studies
is that we have become much more aware of the enormous difficulty and complexity of “Puritanism.”26 This complexity is expressed not only in its broad, trans-Atlantic and trans-insular identities,27 but also in its theological and ideological kinship, one that dates past through early Reformed Protestantism, through medieval, and even to early Christian times.28 Yet, even with the mass of literature now extant on Puritanism, several core questions continue to mystify researchers: precisely how should “Puritan” and “Puritanism” be defined? What are its chief cultural, historical, political, social, literary and intellectual characteristics? How does toleration and religious dissent in early modern England inform us about Puritanism’s diversities? To what degree did Puritanism borrow


The current survey of literature in this chapter is an attempt to be thorough and detailed pertaining to issues in Puritan historiography. It is not an attempt to be exhaustive of literature produced in the past 50-70 years. Rather, I have attempted to engage more current issues and cutting-edge ideas within this literature.

25 Thus, Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson have called Puritanism “the most conspicuous, the most sustained, and the most fecund” aspects of the “American mind.” Miller and Johnson, The Puritans, 1.

27 S. Scott Rohrer wrote, “The Puritans represent the mother lode of American Protestantism: no other early American group has received as much attention from historians.” Wandering Souls: Protestant Migrations in America, 1630-1865 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 299. While historians today distinguish between American and British Puritanism, it should be noted that in the seventeenth century there was no such distinction—Puritanism was a whole, comprehensive, movement, bound by theology, social identity, and vision, and which can be seen as the attempt of the godly for a Puritan Reformation. Thus, “English Puritanism” is perhaps better understood as the “British Puritanism” which consists of both English and American developments.


or exploit earlier Catholic or Lutheran religious expressions? Or what about early modern “Puritan” heresiographies and how do they illumine our understanding of “mainstream Puritanism”? What about the diverseness of Puritan religion during the English Revolution and its impact on early modern families? What about Puritanism’s origins? What impact did fringe beliefs have in Reformed consensus? Who are Puritans and who are not? Can Puritanism even be defined? Or is it, as Michael P. Winship has suggested, an “unavoidably a contextual,  

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34 Case studies of such divergent Puritans as John Preston, John Howe, and John Goodwin have all confirmed flexibility in our understanding of early modern Reformed orthodoxy. See Jonathan D. Moore, English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 217-229; David Field, Rigide Calvinisme in a Softer Dresse: The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe, 1630-1705 (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2004), 18-29; Coffey, John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution, 291-297.

35 Historians continue to question whether James Ussher, John Goodwin, Joseph Hall, or others should be considered as “Puritans.” In the case of Ussher and Hall there were definite puritan leanings. Goodwin stands in a class of his own and is an interesting test case. Though Arminian, Goodwin was appointed vicar of one of London’s leading Puritan parishes in 1633. See Coffey, John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution, 10, and (fn 22) above. Cf. David Loewenstein, Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 238-244.

imprecise term, not an objective one, a term to use carefully but not to take too seriously in itself” that happens to be “an extremely convenient shorthand term?³⁷

Christopher Hill opined that the term and its cognates are “an admirable refuge from clarity of thought.”³⁸ Leonard J. Trinterud observed that “there was something odd about the English Puritans” but that “there has not been any agreement about who were Puritans or what was Puritanism.”³⁹ In other words, has “Puritan” and “Puritanism” shared the same fate as “evangelical” and “evangelicalism”?⁴⁰ J. C. Davies, Basil Hill, C. H. George, Paul Christianson, Michael Finlayson, Conrad Russell, and, at times, Patrick Collinson have rejected it (thus, reiterating Thomas Fuller’s 1655 wish to banish the term from the historical record),⁴¹ while John Coffey, Susan Doran, Christopher Durston, Jacqueline Eales, Kenneth Fincham, Crawford Gribben, Ann Hughes, Jeffrey K. Jue, Neil Keeble, Mark Kishlansky, Peter Lake, William Lamont, Paul C. H. Lim, Anthony Milton, John Morrill, John Spurr, David C. Steinmetz, Margo Todd, Nicholas Tyacke, David Underdown, Tom Webster, Blair Worden, and Keith Wrightson continue to employ its use.⁴² “Puritan” and

³⁸ Hill, Society and Puritanism, 1.
³⁹ Trinterud, Elizabethan Puritanism, 3.
“Puritanism” may be slippery but they are indispensable. Few historians have produced as promising studies on Puritanism as Peter Lake, who has broadened our understanding of Puritanism’s complex identities and social contexts; yet, even in Lake’s work, a sense of pessimism shrouds his conclusions.

Can this discipline be moved forward, at least to the extent that historians can employ the use of “Puritan” and “Puritanism” more confidently and unequivocally? Can historians make sense of this complex, varied intellectual culture and retain their use in writing history? Can one successfully trace Puritan “identities” and bloodlines across its several strains and arrive at a core distinctive? Or, more likely, can one discern a set or


46 The issue of “Protestant identities” has been the subject of several recent studies. Peter Lake has analyzed early modern Puritan identities in “Reading Clarke’s Lives in Political and Polemical Context,” in Writing Lives: Biography and Textuality, Identity and Representation in Early Modern England, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 293-318. See also Andrew Cambers, “Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, c. 1580-1720,” Journal of British Studies, Vol. 46, No. 4 (October, 2007): 796-825; Christopher Haigh, The Plain Man’s Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in
cluster of ideas, attitudes, and expressions that, when woven or fashioned within a particular sixteenth- and seventeenth-century context, form something that we can identify as "Puritan," and "Puritanism?" If so, what are its contents, and what makes it distinctively Puritan? Can historians simply refer to Puritans as "the hotter sort of Protestants," as Percival Wilburn did, or is this an insufficient rendering of English memory? Further, as more historians begin to refer to Puritanisms, and offer competing definitions focused on single doctrines or practices, is something lost? As the wind continues to blow towards multiple religious identities, or irreducible pluralisms, which existed both at any one time, and across time, how long can one maintain Puritanism's collective identity? Winship pointed this out when he said, "It has recently been suggested, somewhat hyperbolically, that it is more useful to talk of 'puritanisms' rather than 'puritanism,' for there were almost as many puritanisms as there were puritans." Admittedly this is an overstatement, but historian Ann Hughes has popularized its reference within the literature, and though "Puritanisms" has more often been associated with studies of American Puritanism, it has broad implications for English Puritanism more generally, if for no other reason than by the fact that in the seventeenth century English Puritanism was thought of as "British Puritanism," a collective identity of ministers and laypeople on both sides of the Atlantic ("the godly") who lived and expressed their ideas in communion with each other, and had equal, though sometimes competing, visions of for a Puritan Reformation, whether to build a "city on a hill" or a "Puritan Commonwealth." The idea of Puritanisms has thus been proposed as a possible solution to the definitions problem, in that it attempts to understand the fragmenting caused by multifarious proposals on how to define Puritanism.

Historians Theodore D. Bozeman, Janice Knight, and Stephen Foster have all written about "Puritanisms" and early modern "orthodoxies." Some historians have

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*47 Numerous historians have attempted to find the one defining feature of Puritanism. While this practice is not necessarily wrong, it is (at best) misguided. Rather than to see one prominent feature above (or to the exclusion) of all, historians should see a core set of identities (or cluster of ideas), that, considered together and expressed as a whole, form what we understand by "Puritan" and "Puritanism." This is, perhaps, similar to Wittgenstein's theory of Familienähnlichkeit, according to which concepts are like members of a family that share specific physical or character traits without everyone sharing the same traits. The varieties of Puritanism relate to one another in rather complex relations or family resemblances.


*52 Richard Pointer notes that Foster "is the least inclined towards this tendency but even his final chapter offers some hints." Pointer, "Selves and Others in Early New England: Refashioning American
traced this tendency to anti-Perry Miller tendencies in the 1960s. In their attempt to revise Miller’s monolithic “New England mind,” which saw a dominant mainstream Puritanism centered around notions of the covenant, revisionists have pointed out, at times convincingly, that Puritanism was much more diverse than what Miller had envisioned.\(^53\)

Thus, most present studies of American Puritanism now focus on its diversity, and contrast similarities and differences between the “puritanisms” of old and New England.\(^54\)

Moreover, it is possible, even probable, that this deconstructionism within the literature owes its origins not only to anti-Perry Miller tendencies, but also to resurgence of interest in studying the multi-fractured “radical” sectaries of the English Revolution. But this raises an important historical question: Did these religious radicals emerge \textit{de novo}, without standing in relation to an earlier tradition or contemporary consensus; or, as the evidence suggests, were they reacting to perceived abuses and insufficiencies within the so-called “mainstream,” especially in matters of obtaining assurance of faith and peace of mind? Thus reflecting on this phenomenon, Glenn Burgess observed that historians are far more apt to be caught up with “origins” and “causes,” than with “consequences,” “effects,” and “aftermath.”\(^55\)

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These questions and issues illustrate the difficulty involved in this task. That historians continue to debate the precise meaning of these terms shows how important this discussion is; further, the plethora of unqualified or non-nuanced usage within scholarship contributes to this quagmire. Further, the numerous definitions circulating current academic literature naturally tends toward deconstructionism because it gives the impression that all those “distinguishing” characteristics are somehow unique or independent from a greater consensus. Thus, some historians have offered precise definitions by identifying a particular characteristic of Puritanism; as David R. Como noted, “Through the centuries, puritans have been made to wear many historical masks.”

Michael Walzer emphasized the revolutionary spirit of the English Puritans and suggested that radicalism was a core feature of the movement (thus, Puritans were political revolutionaries wanting to overthrow the state); William Lamont saw similarities in the “godly rule” of the Puritans; Geoffrey F. Nuttall mused upon the experience of the Holy Spirit as the most vital element within Puritan thought and experience; J. Sears McGee distinguished Puritans by their emphasis on first table duties toward God, “such as avoiding idolatry and the profanation of the Sabbath, more than on second table duties, such as charity;” Bernard Bailyn referred broadly to the “spirit of Puritanism;” Lake has defined Puritanism as “a set of priorities centered on religious experience,” creating something of a “puritan style;” Peter Ivan Kaufman sees Puritanism chiefly within the rubric of self-despair; the great patriarch of Puritan studies, Patrick Collinson, portrays Puritans as evangelical protesters who reacted to the profane society which surrounded them, and as part of a greater network to reform church and state; Austin Woolrych defined it as broadly as possible, as “a strain of piety within the established church;” and Bernard S. Capp sees Puritanism as a culture war in the reform of “morals and manners,” which centered on swearing, Sabbath observance, parish life, sex, alcohol, dress, music, dancing, art, plays, shows, and sports.
Another popular method in recent scholarship has been the attempt to define Puritanism by discussing particular Puritans, such as Richard Baxter, Thomas Shepard, William Prynne, Nehemiah Wallington, TheaurauJohn Tany, Lodowick Muggleton, doomsday poet Michael Wigglesworth, the Harleys, and the Mathers. Still others have emphasized the role of “experiential piety” in their approach to Puritanism.

As one can see, several abstract concepts have been proposed as a rationale for understanding Puritanism. Yet, as critics of the term point out, such concepts can equally be applied to other religious groups and often they are too narrow and exclude other groups, such as Separatists or Baptists, how then can one apply them to Puritanism as defining characteristics? And if one loses the term altogether, as some historians would wish, would not a complex, vibrant religious culture be abandoned along with the term? Others argue that the terms cannot be defined and any attempt to do so would prove unfruitful. Ann Hughes opined, “We have learnt from Collinson, Lake, and Tyacke that Puritans cannot be neatly separated from the mass of English Protestants and counted.” Further, Hughes questions any method that would define Puritans “by a number of simple, experiential elements.”

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60 Trueman questions this last approach to Puritanism in John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man, 5. While the Puritans had a strong experiential element to their theology and church life, so too did other early modern Protestants; further, limiting one’s definition primary to expressions of piety does not adequately address the relation of Puritanism to Reformed orthodoxy.

formal tests” since the historical facts are too complicated for that. 63 Still, such attempts have been made and are so numerous that John H. Primus has suggested, “Some day, no doubt, an entire dissertation will be devoted to the history of the efforts to define Puritanism.” 64 Indeed, Collinson commented that a “secondary academic industry has arisen, devoted to the search for an acceptable definition.” 65a Michael Finlayson has observed that while many opinions have been postulated as to the defining feature of Puritanism, there still lacks a consensus. 66 Lawrence A. Sasek wrote, “Nearly everyone agrees that there were puritans and that there was a puritan movement in England between 1560 and at least 1640, but just who were puritans and who were not, or what tenets or practices were central to the movement, seems impossible to determine with any precision;” 67 and, finally, as Kenneth L. Campbell astutely pointed out, “[understanding Puritanism] brings us right back to the thorny problem of religious identity.” 68 In other words, what distinguishes a Puritan from the rest of the early modern Post-Reformation world?

This industry of defining Puritans will continue to produce mixed results as long as it focuses on one element as preeminent or superior to another. What is needed is a holistic, as opposed to an atomistic, approach that incorporates insights from multiple fields and arrives at core sets of values or expressions or clusters of concepts, that, when woven together within an early modern English religious context, form what we call “English Puritanism;” in other words, one needs to consider the whole in relation to its parts. This proposal is similar in concept to both Wittgenstein’s theory of Familienähnlichkeit, and Norbert Elias’s concept of “configuration.” For Wittgenstein, there was what may be called synchronic family resemblance in similar and overlapping concepts, but where one defining feature does not exist; as members of a particular family share resemblance to one another, and have common features identical to them all (unitas), they are nonetheless distinct persons (diversitas). For Elias, the concept of “configuration” emphasizes that individuals must not be seen as existing in isolation from the society to which they belong; nor, conversely, as a society to which there was no individuality (unitas in diversitate). 69

Further, one must consider the changing nature of early modern English Puritanism; that is, that the Puritanism of the 1560s was not exactly that of the 1640s, since Puritanism was a protean, evolving movement, that adapted to the times in which it flourished. Nonetheless, the evidence is highly suggestive of a normative tradition which

63 Hughes, Politics, Society, and Civil War in Warwickshire, 65-66.
67 Sasek, Images of Puritanism, 1.
68 Campbell, Windows into Men’s Souls, 13.
can be traced to the mid-sixteenth century, if not earlier, and which came to maturation in the middle of the seventeenth. Therefore, my working hypothesis is that what is needed is a metanarrative for understanding this sixteenth and seventeenth-century English religious phenomena. Moreover, due consideration has to be given to the fact that the terms “Puritan” and “Puritanism” changed over its long history; so, while “Puritan” initially arose within an Anglican context by the time of the English Revolution, “Puritan” had a much more eclectic meaning and was broadened to incorporate many of the more radical sects of the period, such as the Muggletonians, whose architect had strong ties to Puritanism, but nonetheless moved beyond it. Yet, even within this increasing diversitas, arguably there was a main line, or “mainstream,” Puritanism, as expressed in the meetings of “the godly” who sat at Westminster Abbey, from 1643-1652, and which was preached and published since its earliest origins. While Parliament admonished the assembly to consider theology as a tertiary consideration, their chief concern being ecclesiastical government, it is telling that majority of their time was caught up with producing a doctrinal consensus, thus confirming the urgency of establishing and codifying a theological identity within Puritanism. These meetings at Westminster produced several confessional documents and catechisms, which set forth a highly unified system of theoretical and practical divinity, and which became the basis for assessing the bounds of English-Puritan Reformed orthodoxy. Sydney E. Ahlstrom observed this point when he said, “Though looking back with thanksgiving to the great confessions of the Reformation era, the Puritans also entered into the making of new confessions with thoroughness and

71 The “Westminster Assembly,” which derives its name from the historic church where these meetings were held, consisted of 121 Puritan divines, lay assessors, and Scottish delegates, who were charged by the Long Parliament, who was then in open conflict with Charles I, to come up with proposals for the reform of the English Church. The divines at Westminster sought to codify what was seen as the mainline tradition within Puritanism, but also allowing for variance on matters of church order and polity. The theological harmony among its members, between Presbyterians and Independents, and those dissenting Baptists within London is attested to by Laurence Clarkson, the alleged founder of the Ranters, who, in his own religious journey, went from the zealous Presbyterians, being “tormented [in] soul, [by reading a book by Thomas Hooker] that I thought it unpossible to be saved,” to the Independents, whose, “greatest difference betwixt them, was about baptizing of infants,” to the doctrine of “one Doctor Crisp...[who] held forth against all the aforesaid Churches, That let his people be in society or no, though walked all alone, yet if he believed that Christ Jesus died for him, God beheld no iniquity in him.” From here he moved onto the more radical “higher and clearer” teachings of Giles Randall and John Simpson, “which was then called Antinomians,” and then onward from there. Clarkson, The Lost Sheep Found; Or, The Prodigal Returned to His Fathers House, after Many a Sad and Weary Journey Through Many Religious Countries (London, 1660), 8-10. In his Radical Religion in Cromwell’s England, Andrew Bradstock remarks on the fluidity of the radical sects of the English Revolution, which is seen in “the ease with which people moved from one to another.” This itself is suggestive of some degree of unitas with the normative tradition, as, presumably, radical departures or conversions would be less “fluid.” Bradstock, Radical Religion in Cromwell’s England: A Concise History from the English Civil War to the End of the Commonwealth (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), xix.
73 Indeed, as Chad van Dixhoorn has stated of the period in which the divines sat at Westminster: “It was an hour of glory for the puritan experiment.” Van Dixhoorn, ed., The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652, Vol. 1: Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 81.
vigor. In Britain, as it happened, their thinking seemed to lead almost inexorably to the doctrinal views so carefully articulated in the Westminster standards and their derivative symbols...Puritanism, in short, is generally marked by careful thought; it is an intellectual tradition of great profundity."74 Seeing Puritans as generally "Reformed" is not new; A. G. Dickens posited this idea in his *The English Reformation*.75 Confusion as to the terms has arisen, in part, because English sectaries were often accustomed to use "Puritan" to describe themselves, though they had sometimes self-consciously departed significantly from its orthodox consensus.76

Before we turn to the methodology and structure of this book, let us first look at the origins of the words "Puritan" and "Puritanism," since they are suggestive not only of something that was perceived as a distinct strain within the English Church, as far back as the 1560s, but also of a growing theological identity and consensus that came to be associated with their use.

Jacqueline Eales stated that part of the difficulty in defining Puritanism stems from the fact that when contemporaries used the term they did not always agree on what they meant by it, which is further complicated in that as often as the term had any static presence for a short time, it soon evolved with new meaning and nuance.77 Nonetheless, historians have found artful, if not brilliant, ways to qualify its use or present alternatives. Margo Todd, for instance, opines, "The historian who talks about the likes of Laurence Humphrey and John Rainolds as 'advanced protestants' need not disturb us. We know what he means by the term because we know of whom he speaks: a puritan by any other name is still a puritan." Todd makes this observation because, when assessing the beginnings of the terms of abuse, "The people who called themselves 'the godly,' 'professors,' and even 'saints' and were called 'puritans' by their foes, were a sufficiently self-conscious and popularly identifiable group in their own day to deserve a name, and the traditional 'puritan' seems as good as any."78 Before Todd, Leonard J. Trinterud made

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76 This self-conscious moving away from orthodox Puritanism can be seen throughout Lodowick Muggleton’s (1609-1698) posthumous autobiography, *The Acts of the Witnesses* (1699). In the text, Muggleton recounts his youthful embrace of the zealous “Puritan religion and practice,” which had such a great impression on him that he chose only to hear the preaching of the “Puritan ministers.” However, over time, many of his Puritan acquaintances, having “no Comfort nor Peace of Mind, as to a Life to Come,” became disenfranchised with the Puritan way, and “left that Zeal, and turned Ranters” (possible reference to his cousin John Reeve, who began as a Puritan but turned Ranters). Sometime later, after himself becoming dissatisfied with Puritanism, Muggleton moved beyond its confessional mores and chose “not to mind any Religion more...and if there were anything, either of Happiness or Misery after Death, I left it to God, which I knew not, to do what he would with me.” But at times, however, his fears of hell and damnation would resurface, “as it did formerly, when [I was] a Puritan.” T. L. Underwood, *The Acts of the Witnesses: The Autobiography of Lodowick Muggleton and Other Early Muggletonian Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 35, 38, 43; cf. William Lamont, “Muggleton, Lodowicke,” *ODNB*; Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy*, 27-40.
77 Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 12.
this astute observation: “There was something odd about the Puritans. On that, everyone seems to have been in agreement for the last four hundred years.”

As just stated, the terms “Puritan” and “Puritanism” first arose as pejorative terms sometime during the 1560s. Their first printed use dates to the 1572 publication of the anonymous *Admonition to Parliament*, a text Patrick Collinson describes as “public polemic in the guise of an address to Parliament.” The *Admonition* appeared at a time “when those English ministers hoping for further reform, especially in the matters of the Prayer Book and ceremonies, were frustrated by the queen’s suppression of parliamentary appeals that dealt with the topics of religion.” Those who sought further reform were styled “Puritane, worse than Donatistes,” and were considered too radical in their reforms; thus ensued a conflict over Puritanism and its ramifications for the English church. The authors of the *Admonition* were soon discovered and sentenced to prison in order to suppress their voices; however, as Marcy L. North observes, they defended their publication by stating that in Parliament there “should be a time of speaking and writing freely,” presumably so that various ideas could be expressed without fear of reprisal. Further, their anonymity, says North, suggest that political and religious freedom was not yet possible for these early Puritans, and that attempts for further reform would be suppressed and censored. Thus, the *Admonition* initiated an early modern academic warfare over Puritanism that spawned numerous anonymous texts. This is known as the first “Puritan” controversy and moved historians initially to define Puritanism in its negative relation to the more ceremonious Anglicanism in that it was a clash of motives, interests, and desires. Responding to personal charges of favoritism to “Puritans,” Gabriel Harvey, “the noted Puritan man of letters,” wrote of “Puritanism” or “Precisianism” in one of his letters, dated 1573; it appears to be the first recorded use of the term. By the end of Elizabeth’s reign in 1603, the name “Precisians” and “Puritans” was a common choice of slander to describe overly zealous Protestants who were thought to be too precise in their beliefs or in the way they lived. Thus, even from its inception, there was an irrevocable


80 For a history of the pejorative use of “Puritan,” see Holden, *Anti-Puritan Satire.*


82 For the historical circumstances surrounding the *Admonition*, see North, *The Anonymous Renaissance*, 134.


tie between dogma and praxis. Based on certain doctrinal formulations and understandings, these “Puritans” deduced or inferred that the mainstay of the English Church was sorely wanting, not only in how its members chose to live and conduct their business, but in the way they thought about God and his majesty, and the broad implications this reverence had for perceiving doctrine, conducting worship services, observing the Sabbath, guarding one’s mouth, giving to the poor, dying well, cultivating a robust devotional life in public and private society, and many other “planks in the puritan platform.”

By the dawn of the seventeenth century, the terms “Puritan,” “Puritanism,” and “Precisianism” were nearly synonymous terms of reproach. Thus, in a bit of irony, the “theological father” of English Puritanism, William Perkins, reputed as the most influential Cambridge theologian, moralist, and casuist of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, disregard “Puritan” as a contemptuous term. Those who were styled as “Puritans” generally despised its use because, as with Perkins, they often associated with the medieval Cathari. They preferred more neutral and apropos terms, such as “the godly” or “saints.” It was not until the early to mid-seventeenth century that “Puritan” would be “owned and acknowledged...as an honorable flag under which to sail—‘the good old English Puritans.”

John Geree’s depiction of the Puritan in his oft-printed tract, The Character of an Old English Puritan, or Nonconformist (1646) was indeed one of the first positive portrayals in early modern England, though there were those even before Geree who struggled over its representation. In 1626, the word was still disparaged, evidenced...
in Francis Rous’s comment that “In the Devil’s language, a Saint is a Puritan.” What happened between Perkins and Geree to account for this shift? This question is not easily answered, but undoubtedly it has something to do with changing perceptions within early Stuart religion and culture, which indicates that the times were changing. One possible explanation is implied in Rous’s complaint before the Short Parliament that “The word Puritan is an essential engine...For this word in the mouth of a drunkard doth mean a sober man, in the mouth of an Arminian, an orthodox man, in the mouth of a Papist, a Protestant. And so it is spoke to shame a man out of all religion.” Thus J. P. Kenyon states: “The most serious complaint in 1640 was that the word ‘Puritan’ was being used by the enemies of Protestants to libel its defenders—the effect being to enhance the prestige of ‘Puritanism’ and enlist on its side a great deal of bi-partisan support which was not basically ‘Puritan’ at all.” It is possible, perhaps probable, that the association of “Puritan” with “anti-Catholic” in the 1630s-1640s was partially responsible for its switch from derision to banderole. Whatever the cause for this change, it is certain that the religion of the “Puritans” was a clearly identifiable strain within English Protestantism, which gave rise to the slander in the first place; and while their religion changed and evolved with the times, it did not lose its characteristics or identifiably. This perception is attested not only in Neal and Brook’s histories, but also in the continued use, even if only reluctant, by the majority of scholars currently working in this field.

The early use and changing perceptions of “Puritan” and “Puritanism” only provide hints as to the full nature of its complexity. Sir Matthew Hale, a prominent seventeenth-century jurist, shared definite Puritan sympathies, seeing ‘religious feeling where others saw ‘enthusiasts’ and knaves, their cloak of irrationalist folly concealing seditious intent.”

Before Geree, John Downe published the anonymous _A New Anatomie; Or, Character of a Christian, or Round-head_ (1645), which depicts the Puritan “in his most noble right temper,” against the “unjust censures” of “this blind World,” as one who journeys through this worldly wilderness towards heaven, being “Heavens Darling, Earths Paragon, the Worlds onely wonder...[and who is] is justly said to be the wonder of God himself.”

96 Francis Rous, _The Onely Remedy_ (London, 1627), 162.


99 Alan Cromartie, _Sir Matthew Hale, 1609-1676: Law, Religion, and Natural Philosophy_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 139. Charles M. Gray calls Hale a “psychological” Puritan but not a “programmatic” one. Holly Brewer, however, calls Hale a Puritan throughout his life, if for no other reason than that he dressed like one and refused to enforce laws against them. Cp. Sir Matthew Hale, _The History of the Common Law of England_, ed. Charles M. Gray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), xvii; with Holly Brewer, _By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority_ (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 176-77. It is noteworthy to add that Gisbertus Voetius, one of the leading Dutch theologians of the Nadere Reformatie, opposed both luxury in dress and long hair on men; he also fought against dancing and “the new habit” of smoking tobacco, thus echoing general Puritan disdain.
The seeming “obfuscating nature” of Puritanism since the seventeenth century has contributed to the problem of its definition.100 What is suggested as a possible solution to the definitions problem is a metanarrative that perceives its constitutive parts in relation to its whole: to what degree were Puritans united together in a common motif, even amid their plurality of expressions? Is the motive of further reform (or, of a “hotter-sort” of temperament) adequate as a predominant unifying theme to signify something of a Puritan style? To what degree do these unities express a common bond or brotherhood? What were its theological continuities with Reformed Protestantism? What was unique about its particular expression of spirituality?

Numerous historians have recognized Puritanism’s appeal throughout early modern England, spreading like wildfire among English towns and localities, but what was it about Puritanism that made it so appealing in the first place?101 Further, can one devise a definition that is both nuanced and expansive, allowing for such diverse Puritans as John Downname, Francis Rous, and Tobias Crisp (and Baxter and John Goodwin), to co-exist on a continuum of English Puritan “identity”? Moreover, what did it means for English Puritans to be English and Reformed?102

1.2 Methodology, Hypothesis, and Structure

This study seeks to shed insight into what unites and defines orthodox Stuart Puritans, but more work will need to be done to explore facets of Elizabethan Puritanism (c.1558-1603), and the later decline of Puritanism after the close of the Stuart age (c.1714-1758). Thus, this study is broadly confined to Stuart Puritanism (c. 1603-1689), but its working hypothesis may have broad implications for the other eras of Puritanism.

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100 Lim, In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty, 7.

102 Tom Webster allows for a "recast Arminianism," epitomized in John Goodwin, to coincide with Puritan orthodoxy. See Webster, Godly Clergy, 147. Both John Spurr and John Coffey affirm Webster's thesis. For Coffey, John Goodwin helps scholars to understand the evolution of English Puritanism in the seventeenth century; for Spurr, men like John Milton and John Goodwin reaffirm the existence of Arminians who were “undoubtedly puritan.” Ellen More is more cautious and states that Goodwin's “theology is more difficult to locate...[it] looked back to the Puritanism of the 1620s and forward to the rational theology of the post-Restoration era.” Cf. Coffey, John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution, 10; Spurr, English Puritanism, 1603-1689, 68; Ellen More, “John Goodwin and the Origins of the New Arminianism,” Journal of British Studies, Vol. 33. No. 1 (Autumn, 1982), 70. Alan Cromartie devotes a whole chapter to Sir Matthew Hale's "puritanism" in Sir Matthew Hale, 139-153.
While Puritan origins precede the year 1558, are closely tied to the Marian exiles and their networking in Geneva, and could possibly be traced to Lollardy, for the purposes of our study it is best to assess Puritanism in its mature expression and age of codification. Thus, the dates are broadly confined to 1603/4-1689/90 or from the coronation of James I to the English throne (1604 being the year in which the first edition of Downname’s *Christian Warfare* was issued) to the Glorious Revolution (1690 being the year Crisp’s *Christ Alone Exalted* was reissued in its definitive and controversial edition).

Seventeenth-century Puritanism in its mainline consensus and context of debate from the time of the calling of the Westminster Assembly to the Great Ejection obligates certain theological issues and boundaries, and that, arguably, in its mainstream expression can be identified as one form of a broadly defined Reformed orthodoxy. It is also necessary to limit this discussion to theological identity, since during this time “Puritanism” as a non-Anglican or ceremonial religious phenomenon was the dominant religious movement, albeit diverse, within England. Further, it is the time in which Downname, Rous, and Crisp published and engaged in advancing the Puritan Reformation. Although none of these authors wrote systematic works of theology, they nonetheless were acquainted with orthodox structure and boundaries, which itself contributed to “the specter of heresy.” Changing perceptions and perceived threats to the consensus were taken seriously, even if handled in oft-contradictory ways.

103 Coffey and Lim, among others, trace the beginnings of Puritanism to 1564 or thereabouts. As muddled as its origins are so with its ending. The Stuart monarchy ended in 1714, and Thomas Kidd places the decline of Puritanism from 1689, tying it to the “Glorious Revolution” which instigated more “Protestant identities.” These dates are somewhat arbitrary in that they do not account for the strong Puritan dynasties within New England (e.g. the Mathers), nor Jonathan Edwards’s own affinity with it. In *The Idea of Progress in the Eighteenth Century* (1990), David Spadafora credits Puritanism’s demise to changing perceptions in religion and its perceived excesses. There were, of course, many factors that led to the disenfranchising of Puritanism and are beyond the scope of this study. Coffey and Lim, “Introduction,” 1; Thomas S. Kidd, *The Protestant Interest: New England After Puritanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 2; Robert C. Neville, *The Puritan Smile: A Look Toward Moral Reflection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 17; David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 98-99.

104 Early modern English heresy culture was as complex and varied as its orthodoxy, and one cannot minimize the impact of rhetoric and misrepresentation on how heresy was often portrayed and classified. See, for instance, the work of David D. Loewenstein, and specifically his *Treacheros Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Language and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Loewenstein and John Marshall, eds., *Heresy, Literature and Politics in Early Modern English Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). It should be noted that “heretics” and “heresies” are classifications made by opposing parties; those who were branded as such did not see themselves espousing heresy, and undoubtedly believed themselves to be “orthodox” in some sense of the term. Indeed, Loewenstein has stated that “in the climate of extreme religious divisiveness, such accusatory terms as ‘error’ and ‘heresy’ had...enormous rhetorical power” in that they could induce fears of all kinds, thus “fueling ferocious opposition to religious toleration in any kind or degree” (Loewenstein, *Treacheros Faith*, 224). Finally, a distinction could be made between “heresy” and “blasphemy” in that the latter was seen as a more willful and vile attack on the object of Christian religion, and often resulted in severe punishment, and even, at times, public execution. See John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 212ff; and Michael Hunter, “Aikenhead the Atheist: The Context and Consequences of Articulate Irreligion in the Late Seventeenth Century,” in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 221-54.
The method of this study is to examine three carefully chosen case studies to inquire whether there were common theological interests and confessional sensibilities that may be found within Stuart Puritanism, and especially within writers who did not write a system of divinity akin to that of William Ames’s *Medulla* or Edward Leigh’s *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, which may justify use of the term “English Puritanism” in the singular; that is, to see whether a greater movement or narrative united these English Reformed Protestants during this central period and core country of development. I have focused chiefly on theological identity, in order to assess whether there is a *sensus unitatis* across a diverse spectrum of confessionally minded Puritans. The themes examined in these case studies are representative of a theological focus, are characteristic of Puritans understood as “Reformed,” and appear within writers who wrote within different genres of literature. It is suggested that there is significant theological harmony across a wide spectrum of beliefs and “strains” within Puritanism, which will, in turn, warrant further studies and more investigation. The presence of these themes within pietistic writings of Puritans is further suggestive of a *unitas in diversitate*.

This study will draw from the published sources of Puritans John Downame, Francis Rous, and Tobias Crisp. Much of this corpus consists of sermons revised for

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85 Wim Janse has observed that “The late sixteenth and seventeenth century European churches were confessional churches: they stuck to a creed or confession as an internal and external norm and ‘party statute,’ and monopolized their world view.” Janse, “Church Unity, Territorialism, and State Formation in the Era of Confessionalization,” in *Unity of the Church: A Theological State of Art and Beyond*, ed. Eduardus Van der Borgh (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 33. The same is true of the Reformed and Puritan parishes within Britain, evidenced not only in the doctrinal statements of their divines, and their confessional mores, but also in the precise way in which Puritans developed a distinctively experiential divinity which instructed Puritans how to live and worship.

86 On picking which themes within Puritanism to study, Patrick Collinson advised, “If we share with contemporaries a sense of Puritanism which is at once polemical and nominalistic, then far from circumscribing its meaning we should regard the incidence of the term in contemporary discourse as indicative of theological, moral, and social tensions which should be the prime object of our investigations, especially if we wish to understand what followed, in the 1640s and beyond.” Collinson, “A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (October, 1980): 488. Further, Perry Miller was correct that “ideas and purposes shaped the course of events. Human beings could not move without a thought in their heads…and those men and women that moved others did so with well articulated thoughts.” Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 143. This work is an attempt to study the theological identity of three diverse Puritans, from which their moral and social understandings flowed; indeed, as Thomas Shepard wrote, “the knowledge of Divinity” was necessary to clear the way for a genuine conversion and life of piety. Shepard, *The Sincere Convert* (London, 1640), sig. A7r.

87 In this book I do not attempt to prove that Downame, Rous, and Crisp were Puritans. That they are “common consent” Puritans is well established in current academic literature. While seventeenth-century classifications are sparse, major influences on current scholarly consensus stems from their association with the Westminster Assembly, some comments in Wood’s *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691-1692), Daniel Neal’s *The History of the Puritans* (1732-1738), and Brook’s *Lives of the Puritans* (1813), the two latter classifying Downame and Crisp as Puritan divines, but nowhere mentioning Rous (possibly because Rous was never ordained). However, Edmund Calamy lists Rous among the Puritans in his *Abridgement of Mr. Baxter’s History of His Life and Times* (London, 1702), 83. It is interesting that in response to criticisms of his *History of the Puritans*, Neal published a response in which he clarified, “My Design in writing the *History of the Puritans*, was not to defend their Doctrine or Discipline, but to set their Principles in a fair Light, with their own Arguments in defence of them…Have not the Papists published the History of their Sufferings by the *English Reformers*? And Dr. Heylin, Fuller, Bishop Burnet, Collier, Strype…all Clergymen of the Church of
print. It will also draw, in part, from other Protestant and Reformed writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, John Calvin, William Perkins, Richard Greenham, Edward Dering, James Ussher, William Ames, Stephen Charnock, William Gouge, Andrew Willet, Thomas Edwards, John Howe, Edward Leigh, John Preston, Samuel Rutherford, John Eaton, John Saltmarsh, Henry Vane, Samuel Willard, and Thomas Hooker. By ascertaining what sources were read and disseminated, and which ones were censored and suppressed one can possibly discern the major influences in one’s thought, however with some hesitancies. It will also consider, to a limited extent, various political, social, cultural, economic, literary and religious spheres pertaining to English Puritanism. It will map Downname, Rous, and Crisp into their unique historical and religious contexts and suggest ways in which they influenced the forming of an English Puritan identity.

The English Puritans did not exist in a vacuum; they inherited a varied and complex religious culture, were receptive of a codified system of ideas that was shaped by countless heresies and heterodoxies dating to the early Christian church. As with Calvin, the Puritans received, used, and transmitted theological ideas, which, in turn they accepted, modified, or rejected. Their heritage was distinct enough to be their own, but it was never only their own; it was a shared expression of ideas that formed a unique cluster and style of divinity and piety, such as “plain style” preaching, experimental predestinarianism, Sabbath observance, and heavy stress on family worship. This study, therefore, does not envision Puritanism as an isolated phenomenon but as a contextual movement that received and expressed attitudes and ideas that united Puritans, even

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109 Lake, Boxmaker’s Revenge, 33. Historians have often referred to Puritan “plain-style” preaching or “naked” church architecture that elevated the role of the minister and the centrality of the preached Word. While the culture of “plain style” (as Puritans termed it) was not exclusive to the Puritan tradition, it did stand in contrast to other more florid forms of rhetorical expression, and did not suggest simplicity in content but a simple, direct regard for the truth of their beliefs. Lim, In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty, 41; Bruce C. Daniels, Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 32-34; and Stephanie Sleeper, “Plain Style,” in Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America, ed. Francis J. Bremer and Tom Webster (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 2:479-480.
amid significant diversity. This unity is suggested in their common ancestry with early Reformed Protestantism and their identities as Reformed Catholic Christians. Bound by a rather robust and diverse covenant theology, these Protestants engaged in sober worship that emphasized “hot-tempered” spirituality and the Bible’s centrality. As such, these unities will be explored in the life and writings of John Downname, Francis Rous, and Tobias Crisp.

The precise ways in which these ideas were disseminated are equally complex, and involve the selective use of fiction, church architecture (including the use of the hour glass, which often was turned two or three times during the course of a sermon), propaganda, and education, as well as the more traditional venues of the sacraments, the preaching of the Word, and the codification of Protestant scholasticism; the imaginative world of the Reformation thus carried over to the post-Reformation era. What emerges is a remarkably diverse and complicated English religious culture that was formed by trans-Atlantic, trans-insular, and trans-continental influences encompassed in a variety of social networks and cross-fertilizations. This complex network is seen not only in the rich diversity of writings published in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but in the communion of saints and academic pursuits that the divines shared, even in their pursuits to be educated abroad, often traveling great distances to the Netherlands or to other parts of the Continent, to be fully trained in proper method.

Some divines, such as John Bunyan and Richard Baxter, were largely self-taught, something that would not have been possible without a robust English printing system that made books readily available and affordable. What used to be the sole prerogative of an English medieval clergy (i.e. ownership of books) became a prominent characteristic of the Puritan thinking class; further, arguably, the most prominent diversities within English Puritanism were at its highest during times of no censure, when presses overflowed with orthodox and heterodox, even heretical, drift during the apex of the English Revolution. By ascertaining what sources of literature were available to whom and when, the picture just mentioned moves from the suggestive to the more definitive; that is, the British or multi-ethnic quality of Puritanism’s bloodlines become evident. This study is, therefore, has arisen in response to tendencies towards deconstruction, suggests a more nuanced approach to revisionism of Perry Miller’s influential monolithicism, and hypothesizes that historians have much to gain not only by looking at individual Puritans (narrative), but at the Further Reformation or Puritan Reformation (metanarrative) to which they belonged. Thus, it is hypothesized that sensus unitatis and unitatis in diversitate will prove to be important concepts in our understanding of Puritanism.

Thus, this study seeks to understand better some fundamental questions that have arisen within Puritan historiography: What are prominent themes within Stuart Puritanism? How should historians make sense of its diversity? What were its unities? Were Puritans united in a quest for further Reformation? Was there a “mainstream” orthodoxy? Is it better to write of “Puritanisms” or “Puritanism?”

While diversity among Puritans has gained recent academic attention, few studies have devoted significant length to their underlying unities. The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate whether Puritanism can be better understood by using narrative and metanarrative, in which Puritans are assessed not only as individuals, but also as members of a religious society.
Finally, in terms of taxonomy, I use “Reformed,” “Reformed orthodox,” and “Puritan,” throughout this book. These terms are often overlapping among various thinkers, but are not identical categories that can be equally applied to all Puritans. For instance, there are numerous English Reformed thinkers who can be identified as “Puritan” but who did not disapprove of episcopacy (e.g. William Perkins), and there were those “Puritans” who were neither strictly Reformed nor orthodox (e.g. John Goodwin). Moreover, there were fairly numerous Anglican “Calvinists” following the Great Ejection in 1662 (e.g. John Edwards). While I will revisit this issue in Chapter 7, suffice it to say that I distinguish between mainline Puritanism, as represented by those who were both “Reformed” and “orthodox,” and those outside that consensus, but who nonetheless stood in relation to it, and were, in many cases, reacting to what was seen as a hyper-sensitivity to orthodoxy structures. The question of how Puritans relate to a Reformed confessionality is a significant one, because, as said before, there was always a strong confessional impetus within Puritanism since its beginnings, and, as we will see, Puritanism was much more than a reform of morals and manners, and had to do with theological and religious identity, or, put another way, both doctrine and discipline. While these doctrines were contested, especially in how far one could go and still be considered “orthodox,” the far majority of Puritans agreed that there should be some sort of normative belief and practice, if, for no other reason, than to have an orderly society.

1.2.1 Narrative and Metanarrative

Franklin H. Littell observed that in the periodization of history, “The Ocean of facts is infinite. Every writer reveals his presuppositions in several ways but never more clearly than by selecting certain persons to feature, certain reports to highlight, certain events to emphasize in telling the story.” This is equally true for studies in English Puritanism. The initial decision to examine one person to the exclusion of another, one facet of their thought or activities independent of another, or to address the evidence of one academic discipline rather than another invariably affects the outcome. To adequately approach history one must be cognizant of one’s own fallibility and must work with utmost fairness and care to relate things as they were and not merely as we think they may have been.

110 Thus Richard L. Greaves and Murray Tolmie challenge the contention that ‘radical’ Puritans were as different from mainline Puritanism as vinegar is from wine. Greaves, Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England (Macon: Macon University Press, 1983), 2-3; Tolmie, The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London, 1666-1679 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

111 Thus John Milton defined heresy not as deviation from an objective standard, but as “a subjective attitude of blind submission to tradition rather than to scripture.” Coffey, “A Ticklish Business,” 130.

112 There remains the question, of course, as to whether some of the more “radical” Puritans should be considered as “anarchists.” Cases could be made that the Ranters, Diggers, and other extremists envisioned a utopian society centered on “a primitivist Millennium in which private property, class distinctions and human authority would have no place.” Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 288.

Further, as Fernand Braudel wrote, “All thought draws life from contacts and exchanges.” Thus, this present study attempts to take into account the proliferation of books and articles from various social and intellectual disciplines. Its limitations of scope have naturally been determined to the extent these studies have been utilized. Further, the lives of the Puritans here discussed span across the seventeenth-century religious scene.

I hypothesize that by looking at three diverse Puritans, who promoted vying streams within a normative orthodox tradition, that the concept of unity in diversity will play an integral role in understanding Puritanism. In order to test my hypothesis regarding unity in diversity, this book will assess the similarities and disparities of three Puritans who are broadly representative of specifics aspects of what has been identified as Puritanism. By ascertaining what binds and unites them, it will surface common religious motifs of Puritan identity, thus placing its unities and diversities within their social and intellectual contexts. Due to size restraints, I have only chosen Downname, Rous, and Crisp as case studies. To further confirm this work’s thesis, consideration should be given to Richard Baxter, John Goodwin, John Pym, Peter Sterry, and others.

The first of these three-divines, the “harshly anti-Catholic” John Downame (1571-1652) made himself a place in the history of the English Bible largely for having produced a succession of concordances. He considered the success of the English Reformation as a miracle, given the “weake instruments (a childe and a woman [i.e. Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth I]” that succeeded in defeating the “mightie Engines” of the papacy. As representative of the precisianist strain, his theology and spirituality will serve as a litmus test to assess whether Francis Rous and Tobias Crisp belonged to the normative tradition. A prolific author, Downame published nineteen treatises, most famous of which is his two-part, *The Christian Warfare* (1608-1611). Downame, like contemporary Reformed theologian, Richard Sibbes, was well known for his educated practical divinity; as such, he

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The second Puritan, pro-Scottish, anti-Arminian, anti-Catholic, parliamentarian, Sir Francis Rous (1580/81-1659), represents the mystical strain within Puritanism, even being styled “the first Puritan mystic.”\footnote{Jerald C. Brauer, “Francis Rous, Puritan Mystic, 1579-1659: An Introduction to the Study of the Mystical Element in Puritanism” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1948); Brauer, “Types of Puritan Piety,” 53-6. Brauer distinguishes between two types of mystics within Puritanism: “classical mystics” like Rous who were deeply entrenched in medievalism, and “Spirit mystics” like John Saltmarsh and William Dell who were at the most extreme ends of the “radical spectrum.” See also Tom Schwanda, \textit{Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism} (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 12-13. For a discussion of Rous’s relation to Reformed orthodoxy, see John Barber, \textit{The Road from Eden: Studies in Christianity and Culture} (Palo Alto: Pickwick Press, 1996), 52.} Rous was renowned as a writer of godly prose that sought to unite English Reformed in a cosmic vision against the hordes of Antichrist and their various manifestations, which include vices and Catholic cultures. His vehement opposition to Arminianism (or, Anti-Calvinism) throughout the 1620s-30s, along with his stepbrother John Pym (reportedly the most powerful man in England),\footnote{As a testament of Pym’s greatness, John S. Morrill remarks that Pym’s funeral “was the grandest...ever given to a commoner in the early modern period, and if the procession did not match the formal splendor of the funeral arrangements for the 3rd early of Essex, his resting place within [Westminster] Abbey was the more striking.” Morrill, “The Unwearingness of Mr. Pym: Influence and Eloquence in the Long Parliament,” in \textit{Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays Presented to David Underdown} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 19. Cf. Vanessa Harding, \textit{The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500-1670} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 257.} was closely connected to his fear of Catholicism.\footnote{Nicholas Tyacke places Rous at the center of English parliamentary debates on Arminianism. See Nicholas Tyacke, \textit{Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640} (New York: Clarendon Press, 1987). See also, L. J. Reeve, \textit{Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 74; C. A. Patrides, “The Experience of Otherness: Theology as a Means of Life,” in \textit{The Age of Milton: Backgrounds to Seventeenth-Century Literature}, ed. C. A. Patrides and Raymond B. Waddington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 189; Peter White, \textit{Predestination, Policy, and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English from the Reformation to the Civil War} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 308; Duffin, \textit{Faction and Faith}, 42-43. For a portrayal of Arminius within the context of the medieval scholastic tradition, see Richard A. Muller, \textit{God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy} (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 31-51.} Rous was unique in early modern England because of his close ties to mainstream divines and his parleying with various late-medieval streams of mysticism, which would not have not been as popularized (or accepted) without Rous.\footnote{Johannes van den Berg writes, “More clearly than with many others, various seemingly disparate aspects of the Puritan movement [the extraverted and introverted] are reflected in [Rous] as we know him from his activities and his publications.” Van den Berg, “The English Puritan Francis Rous and the Influence of His Works in the Netherlands,” in \textit{Religious Currents and Cross-Currents: Essays on Early Modern}}
James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh, and Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector. Though Rous typifies the pressing of early modern English religious bounds, he has recently been dubbed “a broadly tolerant puritan” for his ecumenicism. Johannes van den Berg has further observed Rous’s influence in the Netherlands. That Rous was a lay educator, provost, and politician, shows that Puritanism was not confined to conservative clergy but spread across social classes and boundaries.

The third Puritan, Tobias Crisp (1600-1642/3), a former Arminian from wealthy nobility and one of the few Puritans to earn a Doctor of Divinity degree, represents the antinomian strain within Puritanism, along with William Dell, Paul Hobson, John Eaton, and John Saltmarsh, though these latter “Puritans” were not “mainstream” or “Reformed orthodox.” Crisp was called “a controversial divine” and “the great champion of antinomianism” because many believed that he transgressed the bounds of the orthodox tradition. Like Baxter, Crisp was revered for his godly conduct even though many Reformed theologians did not tolerate his theological deviancies from the precisianists. The tension in his life, between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, illustrates the complex interrelatedness of English Puritanism, and its complex formulations of such common Reformed motifs as law and gospel and testifies that there were many variants to common doctrinal themes. Crisp’s unique place in early modern English religion is seen in the numerous subscriptions to the republication of his work in the 1690s. Twelve ministers, including John Howe, Vincent Alsop, Increase Mather, and Hanserd Knollys, signed a certificate, which was placed in the volume, stating that the work had “been faithfully transcribed from [Crisp’s] own notes.” Richard Baxter, who despised Antinomism, responded to this republication and accused the ministers of “hanging up a sign to show where Jezebel dwelt.” Seven of the twelve responded that they were attesting only to the work’s authenticity, not its content. The times were rife with accusations. When Crisp’s

Protestantism and the Protestant Enlightenment, ed. Jan de Bruijn, Pieter Holtrop, and Ernestine van der Wall (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 25.


Woolrych, Britain in Revolution, 543.


Howson, Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions, 102.


works were reissued in 1755 (and reprinted in 1791), John Gill, the editor, clearly anticipated a negative response to its publication, and insisted that Crisp's "life was innocent and harmless of all evil...zealous and fervent of all goodness." Yet, in 1773, Crisp's sermon "Free Grace the Teacher of Good Works" was reissued with the name Doctor Crisp's Ghost; or, A Check Upon Checks, Being a Bridle for Antinomians and a Whip for Pelagian and Arminian-Methodists. The issuance of this short sermon was to correct eighteenth-century Antinomian abuses as well as free-will religion. It is clear that whoever printed the pamphlet held Crisp's legacy to be free grace and pious religion, and innocent of actual doctrinal antinomism.

It is theorized that these three Puritans, when considered together, will give the terms "Puritan" and "Puritanism" more stability as they seem to elucidate the unities and diversities within Stuart Puritanism. Further, due to size-restrictions it will not be possible to add a fourth "representative" to the mix, Richard Baxter, who depicts both the "Protestant ethic" and the oft-blurred lines between seventeenth-century notions of religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Nor do we have time to assess John Goodwin who is an interesting test case since he had close affinities with Puritanism and Reformed orthodoxy but who converted to Arminianism. However, to offset possible deficits by only examining three Puritans, comparisons and contrasts with other Puritan thinkers of the era will be interspersed throughout. This will alleviate concerns that the three thinkers chosen are either too narrow or limited to resolve the greater question of unity in diversity. It should be reiterated that the three Puritans examined here appear to represent varieties within Puritanism’s mainstream or normative expression, and are suggestive of a broader definition and confessional plasticity than has sometimes been allowed. Further, some recent studies of “Radical Puritanism” have also suggested a degree of unitas with the mainstream, and have challenged the period's heresiographies as consisting of overly-charged rhetoric that had as often political aims as it did a concern for the parishioner.

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133 Tobias Crisp, Doctor Crisp's Ghost; or, A Check Upon Checks, Being a Bridle for Antinomians and a Whip for Pelagian and Arminian-Methodists (London, 1773), 2.


135 For Goodwin’s relation to mainstream Puritanism, see Coffey, John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution, 131-67.


Edward’s seeming skewed perspective on the radical sects of the English Revolution has moved some historians, such as J. C. Davis, to question its historical use: “Relying on Thomas Edwards for evidence
This book’s overarching thesis is that Puritanism, as a construct and term, should not be abandoned in historical conversations; nor should one minimize the differences between Puritans and their various manifestations in the English-speaking world. It is hypothesized that narrative and metanarrative can help advance this proposition. Bound by a common language and heritage, English Puritans (narrative) seemed to form a cohesive historical movement, the Puritan Reformation (metanarrative), that expressed itself in diverse ways, but which had as its goal a further Reformation of the religion and society to which they belonged. American Puritanism is distinct from its British counterpart in that it faced and adapted to new challenges in a wilderness frontier, but nonetheless is irrevocably tied to it culturally and theologically. This is seen not only in American Puritanism’s British flavor, but also in cross-fertilizations between American-born and British Puritans ministering abroad. Further, the international aspect of this cross-fertilization between Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, and other European societies shows the need of building a cohesive metanarrative in order to see a Puritan Reformation, not only in the way Puritans behaved outwardly, but as forming a certain style and expression that combined divinity with piety.

In Prospero’s America, a recent examination of John Winthrop, Jr., one of America’s most well-connected Puritans, Walter A. Woodward observed: “The larger Atlantic world connections of colonization are now transforming Puritan studies. Colonial historians are rediscovering, although in new ways, something that Perry Miller noted more than two generations ago: New England’s Puritans were continuing participants in a complex culture whose intellectual roots extended throughout Protestant Europe.” As John Donne, dean of Saint Paul’s, once put it, “No man is an island, entire of itself; every
man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main... The Church is Catholike, universall, so are all her Actions; All that she does, belongs to all; and so, no manifestation of Puritanism is truly independent, having borrowed its view on biblical authority, vocabulary, culture, ideology, theology, social norms, from not only a common "normative" heritage, but from a broad and robust interaction between the saints across time and continents. Thus, I hypothesize that there is a coherent theological tradition within Puritanism that crosses its vying strains, is expressed in its "family resemblances," and binds Puritans together within their diversity.

As Reformed orthodoxy must be regarded as a rather diverse phenomenon within identifiable but flexible confessional boundaries, it is postulated that operating within Puritanism is a tradition centered around certain theological themes or topics, which bound Puritans of various emphases together.

In short, the method proposed in this book is identifying theological foci within Stuart Puritanism, as seen through the eyes of Downname, Rous, and Crisp. Since I have, due to size restraints, focused chiefly on theological identity, more work will need to be done on social and cultural material. Indeed, it is difficult to assess how social issues may have impacted or altered theological concerns, but the connection seems inevitable, and raises questions of the interplay between dogma and praxis. What appears to be distinctive in these authors, however, is this very thing; that is, in the precise way in which doctrine and practice are interwoven. This praxis pietatis is suggestive of a certain "ethos" within Puritanism, and will be looked at more fully in Chapter 7.

1.2.2 Structure

The structure is as follows: Chapter 2 presents an overview of seventeenth-century background, presents a synopsis of the major political epochs in which Puritanism first arose, flourished, and declined, and introduces four strains in Puritanism: precisianism, mysticism, antinomism, and neonomianism.

Part I (Chapters 3-5) introduces the three representative Puritans—their life, theology, culture, major works, and influence, followed by Part II (Chapters 6-8), which investigates the unitas in diversitate and metanarrative question, and then concludes the work.

In Chapter 3, John Downame will be introduced as a progeny of precisianist Puritanism. His chief works of edited theology and piety, The Summe of Sacred Divinitie (c.1620), A Guide to Godlynesse (1622), and the giant and peerless summa of English affectionate divinity, the four-part Christian Warfare (1604-1618), will be presented and discussed. Due consideration will also be given to the influence Downame’s corpus (nineteen treatises, including biblical concordances, and collections of sermons) had on codifying the Puritan practical divinity within the early seventeenth century. Downame’s role as public censor and editor of James Ussher’s A Body of Divinity (1648) will also be examined.

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Chapter 4 will introduce Sir Francis Rous, one of the longest standing members of Parliament and the “first Puritan mystic.” His major work *The Mystical Marriage* (1635) illustrates the mystical union of all souls with Christ, and reflects the atmosphere of mid-century mystical piety, and more radical notions of the believer’s subjective experience of the divine.

Chapter 5 will place Tobias Crisp among the many mid-seventeenth-century antinomian controversies. He was known as a leading antinomian among his contemporaries and yet equally revered as a godly saint. Perry Miller states that though Crisp began his ministry “as an orthodox federalist...he came to the conclusion, as did Anne Hutchinson, that the Covenant of Grace had nothing to do with moral behavior, and that therefore no ethical duty could be imposed upon or any response expected from mankind,” and thus, “in New England eyes, Crisp figured as an arrant Antinomian.” However, it is suggested that Crisp is not strictly antinomian in a “rigid” sense. Within the seventeenth century, he is counted among orthodox Puritans, and had wide influence into the eighteenth century. While other prominent English antinomians shared some of Crisp’s beliefs, none were as revered or defended by the precisianists as Crisp. This vindication, though contested in the 1640s and again in the 1690s, is suggestive of a distinct antinomian strain within the mainstream normative tradition.

Part II will consider the unities and diversities among these three Puritans. Chapter 6 will coalesce the three prior chapters and discuss unity in diversity. It will compare and contrast identifiable theological foci within their writings, and assess possible ways in which this continuity exists. Chapter 7 will attempt to define Puritanism, and investigate more fully my hypothesis regarding narrative and metanarrative as useful, even necessary, constructs in understanding Puritanism. I will briefly look at how Puritans might better be identified, using John Goodwin, John Milton, Lodowick Muggleton, Gerrard Winstanley, and others as grounds for exploration. Chapter 8 will summarize the book’s contents and conclude the work.

1.3 Summary

Since the sixteenth century, there have been widely diversified beliefs about the Puritans, and common mis-caricatures and satires that have made jest of the seriousness with which they viewed the godly life. Though the study of English Puritanism has gained serious academic credence within the past sixty-five years, there have been few significant advances or consensus in how Puritanism should be defined and understood. This lacuna within the literature is due to historical preference for neat and easy classifications, often based on single defining themes, which can the applied across the spectrum of belief and practice. However, this preference for easy taxonomy does not coincide with the massive


body of evidence on the subject, or, for that matter, with the complex nature of human beings who interact and interrelate within a society. As such, there is a need for revisiting this “thorny problem” of English Puritan religious identity to assess whether unitas or diversitas are appropriate concepts to employ when referring to Puritans, and whether these concepts can, in the end, help illuminate the very meaning and definition of Puritanism. Further, it is suggested that narrative and metanarrative concepts further attenuate the definitions problem by seeing English Puritans not only in their own contexts, but as part of a greater reform movement, which can be called the Puritan Reformation, a distinct attitude and cluster of attitudes and priorities that sought to advance their vision for the Christian life, both on a personal and a more national level.

Therefore, it is proposed that current winds within the literature towards deconstruction or irreducible pluralisms result in an insufficient rendering of Puritanism, and leads to useless terminology. As such, the subject of English Puritan theological identity, especially as it relates to a Reformed confessionality, is an important one because it attests to a sensus unitatis within the movement, which is seen not only in its overall theological harmony, but also in its affinity and longing for its past.

This work is an attempt, however limited, to incorporate insights from both social and intellectual historians, to come up with a more holistic approach to the subject, and to pave the way for a revision of revisionism. It does not suggest that Puritans were coined from the same stamp, in which case there would be no diversitas, but that the stamps were made, and originated, from the same or similar metals, and which relates to a Reformed confessionality.

Finally, this work is based, for the most part, on printed sources. The inaccessibility, and paucity, of archives pertaining to Downname, Rous, and Crisp have limited extensive archival research.