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Cambridge Puritans and the
Nature of Christian Piety

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Introduction

English Puritanism, denied [the] opportunity to reform the established church [after the collapse of the classis movement in the 1580s], wreaked its energy during a half a century and more upon preaching, and under the impetus of the pulpit, upon unchecked experiment in religious expression and social behaviour. . . . [All these Puritans] preached the word of God in the same spirit and felt themselves to be members of a brotherhood.¹

This “spiritual brotherhood” mentioned above comprised a group of men for whom the Cambridge of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (and to some degree Oxford)² became a center of reforming activity, teaching, and training that eventually sent many of them throughout the rest of England and even to the Netherlands and to the New World. While their numbers grew over the years, six in particular can be studied as a significant subset because each one in this group actually served as the human vehicle that God used to bring the message of the gospel to the next: William Perkins, Paul Baynes, Richard Sibbes, John Cotton, John Preston, and Thomas Shepard.

In treating these six pastor-theologians, this book covers some of the most important divines from what might be seen as the “middle era” of those usually designated as Puritans, an era that spans from around 1590 until 1640—or in terms of this book, from the time Perkins began teaching and writing until the death of Richard Sibbes in

1. William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 15, 53–54.

2. See C. M. Dent, *Protestant Reformers in Elizabethan Oxford* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

1635, as regards Puritanism in England, and until the ending of the Antinomian Controversy in 1638, as regards Puritanism in colonial New England. During this era, the focus of much Puritan literature such as that of the six thinkers treated herein brought to the forefront themes that had undergirded the concerns even of those teachers from the “opening era” of the Puritan movement—namely, a focus on God’s gracious plan of salvation in Christ and the life of the believer in union with Christ.

The previous “opening era” of Puritanism, a period that began in the late 1550s, arose just after Elizabeth I’s accession to the throne and the return of the many who went into exile during the reign of Mary Tudor. Unhappy with Elizabeth’s “settlement of religion,” a number of evangelically minded thinkers—those who had been exiles and those who had remained in England—received the name “Puritan” in this “opening era” because they sought to make the English established church a more truly Reformed church like those on the Continent, which they knew either by firsthand experience or by testimony. Among the reforms desired were changes in polity and liturgy, deeming the “Elizabethan settlement’s” way to be tied too much to the old Roman way. In this, many who received the epithet “Puritan” called for a shift in polity from episcopal to presbyterian and for a movement toward a more biblically regulated pattern of worship.³ By the late 1580s, especially with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, Elizabeth and her counselors began to feel less threatened by the Roman Catholic attack of the settlement, whether at home or abroad, and so became more open to curtailing dissent from Protestants, especially these Puritans. This forced those who had spoken boldly in such dissenting language about polity and liturgy, but who also desired to stay within the established church unlike the new separatist groups that came into being, to place some of these original trajectories of the Puritan movement more to the background as noted in the opening quotation.⁴

3. For an excellent study of this era see Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

4. Also on this see Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritans and Separatist Ecclesiology 1570–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Although Brachlow concerns himself primarily with radicals and separatists and not what one would call “mainstream Puritans,” he notes that even these “mainstream Puritans” tended to downplay staunch criticism of the monarch’s settlement in terms of

So, the Puritan thinkers of the “middle period” (ca. 1590–1640)⁵—an era that covers the last portion of Elizabeth’s reign, the whole of the reign of James I, and the portion of the reign of Charles I leading up to the English Civil War—focused less than those of the “opening era” on seeking any changes in confessional standard, church polity, or liturgical practices for the English established church, and more on Christian piety within the life of an established church that, regardless of its faults, they saw as both Reformed in a reformational sense and catholic in the sense that it belonged within the overall universal, visible church around the world. Thus, those treated in this book who also remained in England for the whole of their lives—namely, Perkins, Baynes, Sibbes, and Preston—remained fully, even if for some (especially Baynes) at times uncomfortably, within the boundaries of the established church. As will be seen in the Cotton and Baynes chapter, the move across the sea did bring some new level of tension within the American Puritans as they sought to relate their reformational and English Puritan heritage concerning piety to the Congregationalist polity church life of their new context.

Instead of focusing their attention on issues of polity and liturgy as some of their forbearers within Puritanism had done, this line from Perkins to Preston contended that the real problem they saw as pastors within the English Church was that this so-called “Protestant” and

polity and liturgy starting in the late 1580s as Elizabeth gave greater allowance to Archbishop Whitgift and others to put down such vocal dissent.

5. A note on the “closing era” in terms of English Puritanism: One could say that in general it occurs in conjunction with the English Civil War, the Commonwealth, the Restoration of the Monarchy, and the Glorious Revolution, a period that runs from around 1640 until 1689. With the outbreak of Parliamentary hostilities against Charles I, especially after 1640, Puritans continued to write major pieces on the issue of God’s sovereign gracious plan of redemption and the meaning of union with Christ, but this late period also allowed many who had been forced to wait patiently for the ecclesiastical, confessional, and liturgical renewal of the first period to speak out again. Some of these desires indeed came to fruition through the Standards delivered by the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s, a confessional assembly that itself had been called by Parliament. With the end of the Civil War, the Protectorate, and then the Restoration of the monarchy, the unity hoped for through the Westminster Standards failed to arrive, and, indeed, the “Puritan vision,” while holding much in common concern doctrinally, began to show diversity in areas of polity, worship, and sacraments. Thus by the time of the “Glorious Revolution” of 1689 when William and Mary came to the throne at the ousting of James II, the old “Puritans” had now become various groups of “dissenters.”

“Reformed” people neither fully understood the reformational doctrines of grace nor practiced a piety consistent with those doctrines. They contended that too many of the medieval Roman ways and practices in terms of doctrines of grace and life of piety remained at least latent within the thinking of many in the pews, rather than a robust soteriology built on Scripture as the final authority, oriented around the great reformational teachings of grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, living with the joy and comfort of the Spirit as well as having a mindset of disciplined seriousness that showed desire as God’s covenant people to walk in God’s ways. Again, Cotton and Shepard in their New World context also highlighted these same themes in their teaching on Christian piety.

So Perkins, Baynes, Sibbes, and Preston in their English context, as well as Cotton and Shepard in their New English context, as pastor-theologians focused on preaching Christ from the whole counsel of God in Scripture, giving the call to “close with Him” in repentance and faith to find forgiveness in Christ’s perfect righteousness and to walk with Him in newness of life.⁶ Since these thinkers formed a famous “chain of converts,” issues of grace, faith, justification, and sanctification had deep personal meaning for them, as it did for those who had been brought to Christ as young adults during their university days. Interestingly, they did not take their conversion experiences as a norm of experience for their students and congregations, but rather they sought to bring a biblically reflective pattern of the meaning of being a Christian to those to whom they spoke and for whom they wrote.

In examining their thought on themes vital to their view of piety, such as God’s sovereign grace, the meaning of human response, justification, and sanctification, this book seeks to show that the idea of some modern historians—that Puritan theology somehow distorted or even abandoned earlier Reformed and reformational emphases—fails to understand truly the nature of the work of these pastor-theologians.⁷ Even if it can be argued that different theological emphases or pastoral

6. For the most noteworthy book that deals with the preaching concerns of these divines, see the work by William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996).

7. For a significant text on this discontinuity of the “Calvin vs. the Calvinists” type, especially in terms of the English Reformed understanding, see R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

techniques and applications occurred, their overall doctrinal convictions and applications of biblical teaching never deviated in any wholesale way from the earlier teachings of the Reformation. Among themselves, as the chapters will show, they had some differences in focus and even in particular points, yet these differences in no way discount a basic overall continuity and agreement within a basic confessional framework.

This continuity began by the desire to apply first and foremost a biblical message, given their conviction of *sola scriptura*. Within this, however, the Puritans treated herein believed the biblical message had been brought forth with a renewed vitality for true reformation of the church by their predecessors in the Reformed tradition, whether from the England of Edward VI's day or (and even more so) from the Continent in figures such as Calvin. They contended that their new generation in England (and even New England once the "great Puritan migration" began during the reign of Charles I) needed to heed that biblical and confessional call by the previous Reformers.

Following up on the work of scholars such as Richard Muller and others who have stressed this overall continuity between the early Reformed theologians and their heirs in post-Reformation Reformed Orthodoxy, this book tries to show that when applied to England, this basic continuity does indeed stand quite firm.⁸ Overall, the doctrinal ideas enunciated by Perkins through Shepard, when compared with those of their predecessors both in England and on the Continent, show that they continued to share fully the deep concerns of the Reformation. Certainly, particular applications might appear different; but pastoral application arising from particular concerns and circumstances, while related to doctrinal statement, are not the same. The historian studying theologians from different eras and even different social situations within an era needs to keep such contexts in mind, especially when trying to assess continuity or discontinuity.⁹

Given that the number of books and articles on those called "Puritans" are legion, my aim is a modest but important one. I wish to enter the conversation by focusing intentionally on one "family of divines"—or,

8. See especially the works of Beeke, Dever, Helm, Muller, and Von Rohr listed in the bibliography at the end of this book.

9. For a fine survey of this debate, see Scott Clark, "Calvin versus the Calvinists: A Bibliographic Essay," *Modern Reformation* 18, no. 4 (2009):16.

in Haller's words, a "spiritual brotherhood"—in terms of their understanding of the meaning of Christian piety. I use the term "piety" in Calvin's sense as "that reverence joined with the love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces."¹⁰ One of the reasons for using "piety," especially when understood in Calvinian terms, is that such an idea invokes a concern of trusting thoughtful reflection and grateful action. The more modern and popular but also rather vague term used so often as a synonym, "spirituality," lacks the richness and depth of the word "piety" when that term is unpacked fully. From this concern, discussion will center on two primary teachings: (1) how a hearty belief in God's sovereign grace and man's total depravity nevertheless connected to a full-fledged free offer of the gospel that acknowledged human responsibility; and (2) how a deep concern to uphold the reformational understanding of justification *sola fide* nevertheless led inexorably to a forthright call that true Christians must commit themselves to a grateful growing in godliness.

To put it slightly differently, this book will primarily focus on what this "spiritual brotherhood" taught concerning two issues. First, I address the issue of nature and grace; that is, how they related a firm belief in the absolute sovereignty of God in the salvation of the elect by His grace alone to a strong concern that since the Fall humans were by nature unable and indeed without desire in themselves to respond yet were still responsible agents called to close with Christ as God by His Spirit-used means, especially the preached Word, to bring His people to Himself. Second, I address the issue of the *duplex gratia Dei*; that is, how they treated the "double grace of God," or dual benefit, arising from gracious union with Christ—namely, justification as an imputed declaration of the forgiveness of sins as well as a righteous standing before God, clothed in Christ's righteousness, achieved by Christ alone, given by grace alone, received through faith alone, and the call to grow in godliness—in other words, to pursue sanctification viewed as not only a salutary but a necessary consequence of such a gracious faith-union.

Important work has been done in the general area of Puritan devotion and Puritan spirituality.¹¹ Such studies, however, contain a wider

10. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1559 Edition*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I.ii.40.

11. See, for example, Joel Beeke, *The Quest for Assurance* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999); Sinclair Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of

focus than just the concerns of these particular Cambridge brothers, since their main purpose has been to cover broadly the whole spectrum of Puritan thought or even to be more wide-ranging by covering Puritan thinkers within the overall scope of Reformed thinking of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, or later Puritan thinkers such as John Owen. A need seems to exist for a detailed study of these divines as a group¹² on their own terms since they were such important influences upon many in their own day and have much to say to Christians today as well.

As already noted, this group of thinkers grounded their beliefs and emphases through reflection on Scripture as the final authority and only infallible rule in all matters of faith and practice (the *sola scriptura* principle). With this, nonetheless, they also viewed themselves as linked to the Reformed theology that had emerged from England and the Continent in the early sixteenth century as well as to the orthodox teachings of the great creeds. This vision—biblical, reformational, and catholic—helped provide an overall interpretive structure as they did their work.

On the whole, therefore, this book hopes to show the main concerns of the thesis outlined above in both an exploratory way, seeking to bring forth an exposition of what these men taught on piety within their own historical context, and an analytical way, through regular dialogue with present writers. At the end of the chapters on Baynes and Sibbes, moreover, particular issues with which all the Cambridge brothers dealt and modern scholarship has found intriguing will be highlighted in order to show the greater richness of the thinking of

Truth, 1987); Kelly Kopic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Kelly Kopic and Randall Gleason, eds., *The Devoted Life: Invitation to the Puritan Classics* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2003); Ernest Kevan, *The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946); J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1990); John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Gordon Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (London: Epworth Press, 1957); and Dewey Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

12. Note on this should be made of the book-length study on two of the main figures treated herein—namely, Richard Sibbes and John Preston. See Mark Dever, *Richard Sibbes* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2000); and Jonathan Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

these divines than is sometimes appreciated. The Baynes chapter concludes with a discussion of assurance, and the Sibbes chapter concludes by focusing on preparation/preparationism. Any of these divines could have been used for this coverage; the narrative I have brought forth found these issues placed best where I have placed them.

In thinking about the issues treated throughout the book systematically, the reader is encouraged to see how these thinkers showed:

1. the priority of God's grace when thinking of the Christian life and any aspect of the Christian life, even as they called their congregations to live actively by faith in Christ;
2. the necessary distinction between justification and sanctification, while also demanding that believers recognize their inseparability in a person of true faith;
3. the importance of the church in the life of the believer as the Spirit works in Word and sacrament and through the communion of saints to bring people to faith and to upbuild the people of God in their faith; and
4. the recognition that our growth in grace can serve as an aid to strengthen assurance for the believer, while at the same time remembering as believers to rely always, necessarily, and solely on the completed work of Christ as the ground of assurance before the living God.

CHAPTER 1

Knowing the Times: The Spiritual Brotherhood and Its Puritanism in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Social Contexts

And of other things besides these, my sonne, take thou bede: for there is non end in making manie bokes: and muche reading is a wearines of the flesh.

—Ecclesiastes XII:12, 1560 Geneva Bible

Just as William Perkins and his compatriots kept many a printer and bookseller in business and many a young Christian scholar with food for thought throughout the end of the sixteenth and well into the seventeenth century,¹ so too William Haller's *The Rise of Puritanism*, M. M. Knappen's *Tudor Puritanism*, and Perry Miller's *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century*,² all first appearing between 1938 and 1939, helped produce an entire industry devoted to the study of the Puritanism of the late Tudor and early Stuart periods. The myriad of monographs, introductory essays, articles, and dissertations on Puritanism since Haller, Knappen, and Miller has kept publishers and scholars alike very busy and has led to what Margo Todd calls a "historiographical problem" of "epic proportions": "While some historians carry on the old debate about precisely what constellation of beliefs constitutes 'Puritanism,' others now question whether the concept exists at all.

1. On Perkins and the publishing industry he created, see H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 264–67.

2. William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938); M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938); and Perry Miller, *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939).

While some go on to attach the puritan label even to bishops, others are able to talk about people traditionally regarded by everyone as puritans without even using the word.”³

Such a “crisis of identity” even reaches a work devoted to most of the same thinkers investigated in this book, namely, R. T. Kendall’s *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. After a short review of a few salient articles on the problem of a definition for “Puritanism,” Kendall bypasses the issue, saying that he “regards the term as generally not very useful.”⁴ In its place, he coins “experimental predestinarians” as the most apt description of Perkins, Baynes, Sibbes, and Preston.⁵

Whether “experimental predestinarian” is a fair label for these divines and the theology of grace they espoused will be a constant question of this book and one to which this book will return in the afterword. At this juncture, however, it should be noted that just about every other major commentator on Puritanism—whether describing the history of the movement, its theology, its social concerns, or even its political and cultural agendas—feels justified, although at times with hesitation, in calling those under study here Puritans.⁶

3. Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.

4. R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 6. Kendall admits that “some of the divines” he treats can be considered “puritans,” but continues that since his argument is theological rather than historical analysis, a work of literary criticism, or a study of sociology, “a fresh start is . . . called for.” But this begs the question and shows a major weakness in Kendall’s work as a whole. While no one expects a monograph to treat exhaustively every angle, it must with sensitivity react to the *sitz im leben* (at least provisionally) of those it purposes to understand.

5. *Ibid.*, 8.

6. See, for example, Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 207–73, 288–313 (on Perkins in particular); Todd, *Christian Humanism*; Basil Hall, “Puritanism: The Problem of Definition,” *Studies in Church History, Volume 2*, ed. G. J. Cuming (London: Ecclesiastical History Society, 1965), 283–96; Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 13; Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1–15; J. F. H. New, *Puritan and Anglican: The Basis of Their Opposition, 1558–1640* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964); Dewey Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982); John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 1–33; Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1964), 15–30; Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 114–47; John Morgan, *Godly Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge

But can a working definition for Puritanism be produced from the substantial corpus of literature on the subject? Major contributors such as Patrick Collinson, Basil Hall, Peter Lake, John Morgan, Rosemary O'Day, and Margo Todd believe so. Morgan's thoughts may be the most interesting; while at first he seemingly advocates the abandonment of the label altogether, he later qualifies this by arguing for a "nominalist" approach that concentrates on viewing particular "existences" in contrast to a "realist" approach that tries to find *the* precise "essence" of "Puritanism" and then fit individuals into it.⁷ Yet Collinson, writing twenty years earlier than Morgan, also recognized the need to reject an "ism" approach to Puritanism: "Elizabethans rarely used words ending in 'ism,' and hardly at all to describe principles in abstract. 'Isms' were more often parties and factions inseparable from the people who led them—for example, 'Brownism'...—and it is with this understanding that the word "puritanism" can be most safely employed in its Elizabethan setting. Puritanism, that is to say, should be defined with respect to the puritans and not vice versa."⁸

These caveats, while necessary, nevertheless still leave the student of the period with an "ism" in inverted commas. Basil Hall's illuminating article of 1965 provides a minimalist definition that, while leaving out some who other scholars may believe should be included, nevertheless places Perkins, Baynes, Sibbes, and Preston on the late Tudor/early Stuart map: "Before 1642 the 'serious' people in the Church of England who desired some modifications in church government and worship were called Puritans."⁹ If one adds to this the primary complaint that

University Press, 1986), 1–22; Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 39–40 (on Perkins in particular); and Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 3–12. For an approach that sees no distinct Puritan mindset, see C. H. and K. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570–1640* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961).

7. Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 16, 20–22.

8. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 13.

9. Basil Hall, "Puritanism," 289. Hall, however, would exclude Cotton and Shepard after their migration to New England since to be a Puritan, he believes, means to be in "protest, in the name of a more biblically grounded Christianity, against the Act of Uniformity and the episcopal enforcement of it.... In voyaging to the Wilderness, 'Puritan,' like other old-world concepts, had suffered an Atlantic sea-change" (294). Hall makes the valid point here that the Puritanism of the New England founders was distinct from

Perkins and others made against the settlement—namely, that it failed to emphasize biblical injunctions on purity of life, making these thinkers “Protestants of the hotter sort”—then one might be able to settle the question, at least as far as these particular men are concerned.

Rosemary O’Day follows this line in her treatment of the varying English conceptions of the role of the clergy. She contends that Puritans were those “revivalist protestants” within the established church who differed “not in doctrine from the men who support[ed] the settlement, but in attitude. [The Puritans’] spirit [was] essentially critical, revivalist, and outspoken.”¹⁰ At the end of the day, one can sympathize with Todd’s tongue-in-cheek remark: “A puritan by any other name is still a puritan.”¹¹

But what of the preachers under study themselves? William Perkins serves as an example that shows his own ambivalent attitude to the word “Puritan.” Perkins truly disliked the epithet. Condemning those who branded the godly this way, he stated: “For the pure heart is so little regarded [among the greater mass of the population], that seeking after it is turned into a byword and a matter of reproach: Who are so branded with the vile terms of *puritan* and *presitians* as those that most endeavor to get and keepe purity of heart in good conscience?”¹² Though

their brethren’s in England. Nevertheless, using the very criteria stated above, these men do fit his picture. They continued to see themselves as ministers of the Church of England, and through their polity and practices they showed themselves to be in “protest, in the name of a more biblically grounded Christianity, against the Act of Uniformity and the episcopal enforcement of it.” The fact that they were thousands of miles away across the ocean did not change the “protest” element of their concerns with the established English Church.

10. Rosemary O’Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558–1642* (Leicester, U.K.: Leicester University Press, 1979), xii. In his study of “hotter-sort Protestantism” at Oxford during Elizabeth’s reign, C. M. Dent notes O’Day’s definition but opts for the more generic words “evangelical” and “Protestant” as more “adaptable” and “flexible” (C. M. Dent, *Protestant Reformers in Elizabethan Oxford* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983], 3). While I allow, as seen in this section, a limited use of the word “Puritan” for the thinkers under study in my thesis, I also understand Dent’s reservations; indeed, I have followed his lead in the title of the book.

11. Todd, *Christian Humanism*, 9. She directs this remark at Dent’s diffidence over the word.

12. William Perkins, “A Godly and Learned Exposition of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount,” in *Works* (Cambridge, 1616–1617): III.1.15 (emphasis his). Note: This footnote introduces the edition of Perkins’s *Works* used throughout this study. This was the second

he rebuked these critics of purity for their pedantic name-calling as well as their apathy in pursuing godliness, one imagines nonetheless that Perkins surely would have placed himself among those being vilified with these “vile terms.” When necessity dictated, Perkins would associate himself, however reluctantly, with those called Puritans by slanderers, if by it the slanderers meant the truly godly who were vigorously pursuing their life in Christ.

Perkins, however, could also utilize the label as a term of reproach. In his “Exposition of the Symbol” (“Symbol” refers to the Apostles’ Creed), he castigated as “wicked” those who “hold that men may be without sinne in this life,” telling his listeners that this was “the opinion of Catharists and *Puritans*.”¹³ This statement accorded well with Whitgift’s use of the term in his debates with Cartwright in the 1570s: “This name Puritan is very aptly given to these men; not because they be pure, no more than were the heretics called Cathari; but because they think themselves to be *mundiores ceteris*, ‘more pure than others,’ as Cathari did, and separate themselves from all other churches and congregations, as spotted and defiled.”¹⁴

Could it be that by following a line of reasoning similar to establishment critiques, Perkins hoped to show his sympathies with the hierarchy and so help distance himself from the complaint that he indeed was a “Puritan”? Here we are left with a problem; for the “anti-puritan” quotation above from Perkins merely lies there in the air with no further comment. One thing it does show is that Perkins would

edition of the three-volume Legate, the first coming in 1608/1609. Volume III of the various Legate editions of Perkins’s *Works* is divided into two parts. Part 1 contains “A Godly and Learned Exposition of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount” only; part 2 contains all the other treatises in the volume. Since I am primarily using the collected works of Perkins (i.e., Perkins’s *Works*) for the purpose of notation and quotation in this monograph, unless otherwise noted, I am differentiating the various treatises with the use of quotation marks rather than italics.

13. Perkins, “Exposition of the Symbol,” I:345 (emphasis mine).

14. John Whitgift, *The Works of John Whitgift*, ed. John Ayre (Cambridge, 1851) 1:171. Also note Cartwright’s reply: “As for Catharans (which were the same as otherwise called Novatians), I know no such opinion they had, and they whom you charge are as far from their corruption as you be” (ibid., 1:171–72, emphasis editor’s). For more on the charge that Puritans were reviving the old Cathar heresy, see Richard L. Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 6–8.

never link himself with any group that advocated sinless perfectionism in this life.

The fluidity of the term “Puritan,” even in the period 1590–1640, demands the careful attention of modern interpreters when they use the label. These dates demarcate the time in which Perkins, Baynes, Sibbes, and Preston were active, and in which Cotton and Shepard engaged one another in the Antinomian Controversy in Massachusetts, which shall be treated later as a distinct chapter (as an interesting incident of its own, it shows how the concerns of the brothers on piety weathered “the sea change” to the New World).¹⁵ “Puritan” throughout this period, as well as before and after, was an abusive designation given to a variety of religious critics of the Elizabethan “settlement of religion” by those who defended the settlement. At best there was what Holifield terms a “Puritan spectrum”¹⁶—a spectrum so broad that it stretched all the way from *some* loyal conforming and indeed episcopalian-minded ministers such as Perkins’s disciple Samuel Ward, to overall (but sometimes wary) conformists like Perkins, Sibbes, and Preston, to uneasy nonseparating nonconformists like Baynes, Cotton, and Shepard. In fact, even beyond this, some scholars would wish to include the most vocal “separatists” as “Puritans” in some sense, even though they did not seek a goal of “purifying” the established church but actually to separate from it because the times demanded a “reformation without tarrying” for anything.¹⁷ Generally, however, in terms of English Puritan studies, “Puritan” and “separatists” are distinct terms.

15. As noted in the introduction, the analysis of Cotton and Shepard will be restricted to their theological debates during the Massachusetts Antinomian Controversy. This study will bring them into the discussion because through this controversy, one can see how the sensitive dialectic of divine sovereignty and human responsibility—which I will argue in the main body of the thesis was a major point that the English brothers tried to maintain when they taught on justification and sanctification—could be collapsed on one side or the other, and what the results of such a collapse could be. Thus, they do not play a major role in the main body of the monograph, which will focus upon the theological understandings of those within this line of converts who remained in England.

16. I am indebted to Professor Brooks Holifield of Emory University, who first introduced me to this phrase in a lecture on Puritanism as part of the series CT 303: An Introduction to Historical Theology from the Reformation to Barth (Atlanta, 1988).

17. The question of the relationship between the separatists and the “church-puritans” is beyond the scope of this book. For a discussion of these matters, see Brachlow,

To a strong nonseparating nonconformist and especially to a separatist, for instance, those like Perkins and others would likely seem to be far too loyal to an unbiblical status quo—who, while stressing certain points of right doctrine, did not truly desire purity for Christ's church. On the other hand, from the Cambridge brothers' vantage point (the more conforming—Perkins, Sibbes, and Preston—and even the more nonconforming—Baynes, Cotton, and Shepard), separatists of all stripes sought not to purify the church in England but rather to ruin it by rending it asunder.¹⁸ Finally, apologists of Elizabeth's "settlement of religion" who were concerned to uphold the Elizabethan church as God's ordained church for England, even if they sought some changes, gave the name "Puritan" as a term of reproach to any who unsettled the ordered ecclesiastical structure and way of worship, which they believed God had established in England, even if such declared their overall conforming position within it.¹⁹

Any denominating of the "spiritual brotherhood" treated herein as "Puritan" must therefore be viewed in light of: (1) their acceptance of the need for an established church in England; (2) their recognition that the present established church, no matter what its flaws, was indeed a true church of Christ; and (3) their forthright denunciations of separatism. It should also be remembered that seeking presbyterianism within an established structure (something those under study here never strenuously advocated, although Baynes came close in *The Diocesans Tryall*) or separatism (something they all rejected) were but two possibilities for reformist-minded Christian thinkers who were uneasy with the settlement. There was also the possibility of a "wait and see" attitude, all the while working as conforming clergy for a purifying "heart-reform" among the populace.

Communion of Saints, 39–40; and B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

18. Note here the case of William Ames, Perkins's student and friend of Paul Baynes. While sharply critical of the settlement for both lack of purity and the episcopal polity, he never completely separated from the English established church. Indeed, he was quite critical of those British exiles in the Netherlands who had separated from the Church of England. For a discussion of these points, see Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 41–45, and Keith Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1972).

19. On the use of "Puritan" as a pejorative epithet, see Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 15–30.

While none of those under study who remained in England (see chapters 2–5) produced any works advocating episcopacy or made any strong polemics in favor of the prayer book, they all *generally* remained quiet about issues of polity and liturgy. Paul Baynes, who wrote the treatise *The Diocesans Tryall*, proved the exception to this rule in this work and did indeed attack episcopacy. Nevertheless, as will be shown in chapter 3, Baynes eschewed separatism as well. In fact, although silenced by authorities for his recalcitrance, Baynes remained within the established church until his dying day, laboring for what he deemed most important—namely, the “heart-piety” mentioned above.

Cotton and Shepard (the subjects treated right before the conclusion) prove to be more of a problem on the matter of conformity. Yet even here, when they did reject episcopacy once in the “freer-aire” of New England, they did so not as separatists such as the Plymouth and Salem colonies, but rather as those who adopted a new polity model—namely, Congregationalism or, as it was often called in England, Independency—as that which offered the best model for an established church. Still seeing themselves tied to the established church of the home country, however tenuously, they hoped the church in England would adopt such ways once its leaders saw both the scriptural basis and the excellent spiritual fruits in its New World context.

Not only so, but they too, even in their New England experience, repudiated a separatist stance toward the established church of the homeland, considering their ordinations at the hands of bishops in England to be valid in New England.²⁰ As noted, they deemed themselves different from the actual separatistic colonial settlements of Plymouth and Salem. Indeed, part of Cotton’s battles with the separatist Roger Williams concerned the very issue of the relationship of those in New England to the established church of the homeland.²¹ Thus even here, the issue was not separation from the concept of an

20. This, however, carried with it a paradoxical element. Their English ordinations gave them the title “The Reverend Mr.,” but such ordination still had to be confirmed by the calling by a congregation to a particular visible local assembly.

21. For discussions of the Cotton-Williams battles, see the following: Edwin Gausted, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1963); Larzar Ziff, *The Career of John Cotton: Puritanism and the American Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962); and Sacvan

established church per se, but how their ability to express their concept freely in New England affected the understanding of how to apply the concerns about piety, concerns they had learned through figures such as Perkins, Baynes, Sibbes, and Preston, now in their New World context.

Regarding the concept of “Puritanism” and the place of these thinkers within it, all of these divines should probably be seen as Puritans given that they were conformists in general, although some moved in a more nonconforming but nevertheless nonseparating direction. Within this, even the most conforming among them could be wary and critical of the establishment, if the opportunity arose, for its overall emphases or lack thereof concerning true biblical doctrine and piety. This places them within, at least, a generic Puritanism.

The whole question seems to rest on whether one wishes to define the term “Puritan” broadly or narrowly. If by it, one means primarily those advocating a purifying of the established church through a call for presbyterian polity or the criticisms of liturgy and vestments and the subsequent call for worship following a biblically regulative principle, these spiritual brothers would not fit such a mold for the “Puritan” way, since these were not their chief complaints with the established church. The brothers’ chief interests lay far more with matters of personal piety, as that thoughtful and heartfelt piety revolved around justification and sanctification—the two great benefits of union with Christ. They disliked the label “Puritan.” Nevertheless, they also felt that there existed within the established church in England a remarkable failure to follow a biblically rooted soteriology looked at through the lens of Protestant Reformation concerns, and so they used their positions as conforming ministers as platforms to exhort the members of the established church to purity by following the doctrinal guidelines already established confessionally in a document such as the Thirty-Nine Articles. Their Puritanism included a vision for visible reformation of the whole established church that would arrive through strong preaching and

Bercovitch, “Typology in Puritan New England: The Williams-Cotton Controversy Reassessed,” *American Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1967): 166–91.

For the two sides of the debate, see John Cotton, *The Controversie Concerning Liberty of Conscience in Matters of Religion* (London, 1646); John Cotton, “A Sermon Delivered at Salem (1636),” in *John Cotton on the Churches of New England*, ed. Larzar Ziff (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 41–68; and Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenant of Persecution, for Cause of Conscience* (London, 1644).

teaching about coming to Christ and living in Him rather than around structural ecclesiastical purity.

Part of the solution to the problem of defining just who these men were and the somewhat ambiguous and never structurally organized movement to which they belonged—whether one wishes to refer to them as “Puritans” and it as “Puritanism” or something else—arises as one reflects seriously on the intellectual, cultural, and social contexts in which they worked and in which this “brotherhood of common concern” arose. Before looking in more detail at what these spiritual brothers from Cambridge taught concerning the doctrines of sovereign grace and the nature of Christian piety (the focus of the subsequent chapters), the rest of this chapter seeks to introduce the reader to two issues of these historical-contextual issues: (1) their understanding on how to view the relationship of faith and reason, given the call to a learned ministry and to a staunch upholding of the Scriptures as the sole final authority in matters of faith and practice; and (2) their belief that the established church was indeed a true church, yet sorely in need of a reformation of the heart. While no pretense is made that what follows gives an exhaustive handling of these two contexts,²² this brief overview should help the reader recognize some important social and

22. The closest approximation to an exhaustive analysis of Puritanism in the period 1558–1640, which takes into account much of the historical background, would be to make a triad of Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*; Lake, *Moderate Puritans*; and Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c.1590–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). These three tend to agree with one another on the rise and significance of a “moderate Puritanism” that, albeit uncomfortably at times, remained within the Church of England with a strong vision for the Church of England and a strong tie theologically to the mainstream Church of England position. This being said, both Tyacke and Collinson also see the ecclesial and theological leadership within the established church as a whole throughout the Elizabethan and for much of the Jacobean period as being overall Reformed in direction amid the retention of the older episcopal system. Lake seems somewhat less comfortable with this, although he does not challenge the idea as much as Peter White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Also, in a recent work, Julian Davies, while not challenging the idea that something “new” in a sense came on the scene with the accession of Charles I in 1625, takes the focus away from a “Calvinism vs. anti-Calvinism” clash (Tyacke) and places it on a political ideology, which he calls “Carolinism,” which nevertheless had significant religious overtones (Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993]).

cultural factors that helped bring such a passionate concern in these thinkers for the call to personal godliness in Christ. Too often it seems, some modern scholars, in the justifiable attempt to place these divines within the history of ideas, have relied too heavily on partial definitions, such as the idea that they were all “scholastics” or “primitivists” or basically “nonecclesiologically minded” or “voluntarists,” and so forth, which singly fail to delineate fully what drove the men under examination herein in their reforming work.

Elizabethan Cambridge: Training Ground for a Spiritual Brotherhood

From early in the sixteenth century, Cambridge beckoned young men from England to come and discuss new ideas that were flowering elsewhere in Europe. The humanist scholar and critic of the medieval church, Erasmus, made several trips and served the university as a lecturer in Greek in 1506 and as the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity from 1509 until 1514.²³ Interested fellows and students alike met at the Inn of the White Horse during the 1520s to debate the teachings emanating from a heretofore little known university in Wittenberg, Germany, as they drank their beer and wine. These gatherings were informal get-togethers and more than likely included later opponents of the Reformation in England such as Gardiner, along with advocates for reform such as Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and Bale.²⁴

New ideas, new learning, and reformation—advocates for these appeared in a variety of guises in Cambridge throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century. They called on England as a nation and the individuals that comprised it to change. In so doing and with varying agendas, they invoked the name of Christ as the one who led them to these exhortations to the nation and the people, for in this period intellectual and religious concerns intertwined with admonitions for personal and societal change.

23. On Erasmus in Cambridge, see Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 21–40, and Johan Huizinga, *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 29–38, 58–61, 79–86.

24. On the Inn of the White Horse, see Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 45–46, 79; E. G. Rupp, *The English Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 18–20; and J. B. Mullinger, *History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1888–1911), 1:99–103.

Elizabeth's settlement of the religious question in the aftermath of her accession to the throne ended, at least in the minds of monarch and advisors, almost half of a century of confusion as to whether the English Church would remain within the Roman fold or separate into some other form, but it also brought with it new challenges and problems. One such problem was what to do with the universities, since these universities, while certainly serving the state, had always maintained some type of independence from royal interference. The royal visitation to Cambridge in July 1559 sought to enforce upon masters and fellows conformity to the Crown through an oath of allegiance to the monarch and to the royal supremacy over both church and state.²⁵ In general, however, the visitation, though thorough, proved mild in terms of disciplinary results.²⁶

While this 1559 visitation mainly concerned itself with the elimination of strong dissent by those who still held allegiance to the old regime of Mary Tudor and to Rome, Elizabeth and the authorities under her faced another problem: "How to secure in the universities as elsewhere a minimum of outward conformity to the establishment without alienating some of the staunchest supporters of the Protestant settlement."²⁷ Twigg notes: "Outward conformity and broad uniformity, rather than a precise, rigid orthodoxy, were the Crown's main aims. This policy was largely successful in containing Protestant extremism at Cambridge, although there was trouble at Corpus Christi (in the 1570s) and at St. John's (in the 1560s and again in the 1580s)."²⁸

These "staunchly Protestant and Reformed" critics or "Protestants of the hotter sort" lived on the same grounds, ate in the same halls, listened to lectures in the same schools, and studied under the same fellows as their more conformist brethren. Like their forbears who met

25. For this oath, see G. W. Prothero, ed., *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents Illustrative of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906), 9, 40.

26. See Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 104–7, who records that significant changes occurred in only four of the fourteen colleges. Also see Mark Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge in Transition, 1558–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 168–70; and John Twigg, *The University of Cambridge and the English Revolution, 1625–1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4, 8–9.

27. Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge*, 169.

28. Twigg, *University of Cambridge*, 9. For a detailed account of the troubles at Corpus Christi and at St. John's, see Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 119–206.

at the White Horse to discuss Luther, they too could meet informally to analyze the Scriptures with those who would later oppose them. The most famous study group in this regard was one that included not only Laurence Chaderton, Ezekiel Culverwell, John Knewstubb, and John Carter (Puritans all), but also Lancelot Andrewes: "At their meetings they had constant Exercises: first, They began with prayer, & then applied themselves to the Study of the Scriptures; one was for the *Original Languages*, another's task was for the *Grammatical interpretation*; another's for the *Logical Analysis*; another's for the true sense and meaning of the Text; another gathered the Doctrines; and thus they carried on their several employments, till at last they went out, like Apollos, eloquent men, and mighty in the Scriptures."²⁹

This record of one group's weekly "conference," which, as Collinson observes, had affinities with "the method of biblical study perfected by the protestant humanists in Zurich and widely employed in the continental Reformed churches,"³⁰ bears directly on the type of education that young men matriculated at Cambridge received, particularly those with an eye to the ministry. Here an issue arises about the type of education related to questions of faith and reason, given that the emerging spiritual brotherhood from Cambridge desired both a learned ministry, as well as one that submitted all questions of faith and practice to the Scriptures as the very Word of God.

Being "mighty in the Scriptures" marked *the* all-important goal; but just how did one achieve this? Could man's created yet fallen powers of reason be used? If the Bible provided life's blueprint, of what value was education in the arts? And if the arts should be studied, how did one pursue this task?

While they could be quite belligerent toward the settlement of religion for its failure to follow scriptural guidelines of polity or to promote greater godliness in the nation (or both), the precise, Scripture-minded, further Reformation-oriented "Protestants of the hotter sort" emerging from Elizabethan and Jacobean Cambridge remained quite conservative in their educational practices. Even in his argument that

29. Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Thirty-Two Eminent Divines* (London, 1677), 133 (emphasis his). See Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 126–27; John Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 237–38; and Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 270.

30. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 126.

“Puritanism” should be defined, at least partially, in terms of its “primitive” leanings toward “the standards of the Great Time [i.e., the world of the Bible],” Bozeman asserts that Puritan views “should not be confused with the Protestant anti-intellectualism of then or later times.”³¹ When, as John Morgan records, tracts appeared that criticized Oxford and Cambridge for their failure to inculcate godliness in their students and to train them in the proper study of divinity, such tracts carried no rebuke of seeking an education that included a broad coverage of the liberal arts and furnished no major substitutions for the present curriculum or plans for curriculum reform.³²

Indeed, some lavishly praised the universities. Richard Greenham, whom Haller designates “the patriarch of...[the] ‘affectionate practical English writers’” and whose pastoral labors in Dry Dayton (five miles from Cambridge) proved inspirational for those who followed him in the brotherhood,³³ stated: “Colledges are as Epitomes of the Commonwealth...; and what a thing were it in an Epitome to find superfluitie. Universities are the eyes of the Commonwealth, and the mote in the eye is a great trouble. Brieflie, universities be the Lebanon of the Lorde, from whence timber must be fetched to build the Temple.... They be the polished sapphires to garnish the house of the Lord.”³⁴

William Ames, student of William Perkins, the “semi-separatist” who fled to Holland rather than conform and who was to have quite an impact on the New England divines,³⁵ also used the eye metaphor in his preface to his friend Paul Baynes’s *The Diocesans Tryall*: “Cambridge is or should be, as an eye to all our land: so that the alterations that fall out there cannot but be felt of all parts.”³⁶

Of course, ensconced within these panegyrics came a stiff warning: The universities must flee “superfluities” and beware of “motes in the

31. Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 69.

32. John Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 238–40.

33. Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 26. On Greenham, see Haller, *Rise of Puritanism*, 26–29, and Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 215–18.

34. Richard Greenham, *The Workes of the Reverend Richard Greenham*, ed. Henry Holland (London, 1612), 734.

35. On William Ames, see Sprunger, *Learned Doctor William Ames*.

36. William Ames, “Preface,” in Paul Baynes, *The Diocesans Tryall* (London, 1621), n.p. Although the preface was not signed, the general scholarly opinion is that Ames wrote it. This opinion has been followed here.

eye.” Training “godly and painful preachers” and encouraging godliness in those who chose not to pursue the ordained ministry mattered most to these divines when it came to viewing the university’s functions. In a 1651 letter to Benjamin Whichcote, admonishing Whichcote to retain the Cambridge tradition of a “spiritual plain powerful ministry,” Anthony Tuckney recalled that Paul Baynes once said that the reason “why Cambridge men were accounted more profitable preachers than Oxford men” was because “God had, from the first reformation, blessed Cambridge with exemplary plain and spiritual preachers.”³⁷

Rather than disregard the teachings of the schools in their preaching, however, the “godly preachers” of this spiritual brotherhood sought to transmit them to their wider audience. In a letter to the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s governor John Winthrop, Thomas Shepard, who helped found Harvard College in New England, far from rejecting classical “heathen” authors, defended their use in the fledgling institution.³⁸ The seventeenth-century historian, Thomas Fuller, wrote: “Our Perkins brought the schools into the pulpit, and, unshelling their controversies out of their hard school terms, made thereof plain and wholesome meat for his people.”³⁹ Perkins himself—while pointing out to the brotherhood the goal, “let us remember the end we aim at is not humane or carnall: our purpose is to save souls”—nevertheless also advocated a learned ministry and repudiated what he called “Anabaptisticall fancies,” which favored “revelations of the Spirit” and “contemne[d] humane learning and the studie of Scripture.”⁴⁰

Just what, however, was taught in the schools? In many ways the Cambridge that Perkins and others entered as students⁴¹ appeared

37. Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*, ed. S. Salter (London, 1753), 37. Porter alerted me to this reference. See Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 229.

38. Thomas Shepard, Thomas Shepard to John Winthrop in *Winthrop Papers* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1943), 346.

39. Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State and the Profane State*, ed. J. Nichols (London, 1841), 81.

40. Perkins, “On the Calling of the Ministrie,” in *Works*, 2:431, 442.

41. All of them, except Preston and Shepard, matriculated into the university during Elizabeth’s reign: Perkins to Christ’s in 1577; Baynes to Christ’s in 1590; Sibbes to St. John’s in 1595; and Cotton to Trinity in 1597–1598. Preston entered King’s in 1604, i.e., right at the beginning of James’s reign. Shepard, by far the youngest, matriculated into Emmanuel in 1619. More biographical information will be given in the subsequent chapters on each of these preachers.

similar to the university as it had been since medieval times. The basic scholastic structure of the curriculum remained intact.⁴² To earn a degree, Cambridge required students to know and use all the “scholastic forms” such as disputation and declamation. Aristotle and the medieval reading of Aristotle remained a strong source of educational nourishment.⁴³ Nevertheless, subtle changes, possibly unnoticeable to some of the fellows and professors themselves, appeared as cracks in the older medieval educational edifice.

For one thing, the social composition of the university had changed. No longer was Cambridge primarily a tightly knit community of scholars working and studying directly under the church in some way, shape, or form. Under these previous circumstances, discipline could be more tightly maintained. Ecclesial, social, and economic changes under the Tudors brought into Cambridge and Oxford the sons of the gentry who arrived at the universities with secular careers in mind. Many were not even considering a degree. While those who came to Cambridge destined for ecclesiastical callings certainly desired degrees and possibly placed themselves under their tutors’ discipline with more vigor than those not following the call to the ministry, they nevertheless worked in this more open atmosphere.⁴⁴

This indeed may have helped shape the brothers’ perceptions of the lack of godliness in the England of their day—they witnessed it firsthand in their university experience as students. At least one of those under examination here, John Preston, entered Cambridge with

42. For the statutes governing the Cambridge curriculum, see “Statuta Reg. Eliza., c.” and “Interpretation of the Statutes” in George Dyer, ed., *The Privileges of the University of Cambridge* (London, 1824), 1:164–206 and 277–99 respectively. Also consult Harris Francis Fletcher, *The Intellectual Development of John Milton* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press 1961), 2:esp. ch.1; and Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge*, 89–94.

43. See William Costello, *The Scholastic Curriculum in Early Seventeenth-Century Cambridge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 35–38, 146–50.

44. On the rise of students at Tudor and pre-Revolution Stuart Cambridge not seeking a career in the church, see Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge*, especially 83–124; Jefferson Looney, “Undergraduate Education at Early Stuart Cambridge,” *History of Education* 10, no. 1 (1981): 9–19, and Lawrence Stone, “The Educational Revolution in England, 1560–1640,” *Past & Present* 28 (1964): 57–80. Looney writes on 9: “It is generally recognized that during the reign of Elizabeth I, significant numbers of children of gentle birth with no intentions of entering the church began to enter the English universities. This trend continued until 1640, and by the end of the period as many as half the entering students were of gentle birth.”

no thought of being a “Puritan” minister or even a part of the “Puritan godly” and indeed looked down upon preaching.⁴⁵ Perkins mentioned, in what Breward calls a “rare autobiographical reference,” that prior to his conversion (which occurred while he was a student at Cambridge), “he was deeply interested in astrology ‘until it pleased God to lay before me, the profaneness of it.’”⁴⁶ While all of those treated herein claimed Cambridge as the earthly home of their conversions, they also recognized it as a place in which the unconverted and undisciplined in matters of a true biblical piety lived and worked.

By the mid-1500s the statutory curriculum itself, while retaining features of the traditional medieval scholastic way, also deviated at points from the standards of the Middle Ages. In keeping with humanist concerns, rhetoric was given more emphasis and moved from the later years to the first year of the BA, where originally logic reigned supreme. Logic, nevertheless, retained its high profile and was taught in the second and third years.⁴⁷ And while, as Morgan contends, “Aristotelianism proved a hardy plant,”⁴⁸ the Aristotelianism learned by Cambridge undergraduates had undergone at least a slight face-lift. The increased concern of Renaissance thinkers for textual studies found its way to Tudor Cambridge and brought with it a new reading of Aristotle in light of his own ancient context and in light of other classical authors.⁴⁹ Also, while one must be careful not to make too much of it,

45. Thomas Ball, *The Life of the Renowned Doctor Preston*, ed. E. W. Harcourt (London, 1885; according to Harcourt, originally published in 1628), 5–18. In his well-researched *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) Jonathan Moore noted that I was incorrect in the original dissertation version of this manuscript to follow Harcourt’s dating, and I thank him for the correction that Ball’s biography could not have been written until 1636 at the earliest.

46. Ian Breward, “The Significance of William Perkins,” *The Journal of Religious History* 4, no. 2 (1966): 116–17. The Perkins quotation is from *Resolutions to a Countryman* (Cambridge, 1585), sig. Bia. Ball reminisced that his master, John Preston, also dabbled in the astrological arts prior to his conversion. See Ball, *Life of the Renowned Doctor Preston*, 14–16.

47. See Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge*, 85–93.

48. John Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 106.

49. See Todd, *Christian Humanism*, 61–63, 80–81. She writes on 62, largely in criticism of Costello, who believes that the statutory requirements show the continued indebtedness of Tudor and Jacobean Cambridge educators to medieval views: “The medieval structure...was maintained by the statutes, as were the medieval pedagogical

“Ramism,” as outlined by the sixteenth-century thinker Peter Ramus, as an alternative to a more rigid Aristotelianism way provided some Cambridge thinkers, especially Perkins and Ames, a different way of framing logic, philosophy, and ethics.⁵⁰

Perkins’s extremely influential manual on homiletics and exegesis, “The Arte of Prophesying,”⁵¹ showed the brotherhood’s reception of

methods... But the way in which such integral parts of the medieval curriculum were presented to the undergraduates had changed dramatically.” Also note Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge*, 93: “Too often historians of education have mistaken rules and regulations for evidence of practice.” Also see John Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 226–28. Finally, note Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002). Stark also warns the modern person looking back on the scholasticism at the universities of the Middle Ages to beware of failing to recognize that the medieval scholastics, while often advocating Aristotle, could be quite critical of Aristotle long before Renaissance humanist criticisms of scholasticism even came into play.

50. The issue of the influence of Ramism on Tudor and Jacobean Cambridge is beyond the scope of this book. Perry Miller first brought the importance of Ramist thought as a source for the Cambridge brotherhood’s thought to the attention of the scholarly community in *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), chaps. 5–7. Since Miller, scholars have differed widely over Ramism’s relative importance; but the general view held today is that Ramism, while certainly an influence, should *not* be viewed as providing the main foundation for these divines’ theological discourse. See Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 67–68; Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge*, 93–95; John Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 110–12; Todd, *Christian Humanism*, 67–68; and Richard Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 16–20. Muller writes on 16: “It would be a mistake to view Ramus as either an adversary to all things Aristotelian or as a humanistic liberator of theology from ‘scholastic subtleties.’ Ramus’ thought is better understood as a modified Aristotelianism in the tradition of the late medieval logician Rudolf Agricola... Some of [Ramus’s] best arguments were drawn directly from Aristotle.”

For a sympathetic treatment of Ramist influence on the Cambridge brotherhood, see Sprunger, *Learned Doctor William Ames*; and Donald K. McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins’ Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987). Yet even McKim states on 132: “The philosophy of Ramus provided [for Perkins and Ames] definitions for and grounded theology’s centring focus on God. This was where Puritans who followed Calvin believed the proper emphasis should be. Ramism as adapted by the Puritans did not give specific content to theology as such. The sources of theology for the English Puritans were more from Calvin’s Geneva [than] from Ramus’s Paris.”

51. Perkins, “The Arte of Prophesying,” in *Works*, 2:731–62. For a discussion of the importance of Perkins’s “The Arte of Prophesying,” see Teresa Toulouse, *The Art of Prophesying: New England Sermons and the Shaping of Belief* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 14–23. Also see my piece: Paul Schaefer, “*The Arte of Prophesying* by William Perkins (1558–1602),” in Kelly Kapic and Randall Gleason, eds., *The*

elements of the “new learning.” His list of writers who “leant their help” in “the framing” included not only eminent Reformed divines from the Continent, such as Beza, Hyperius, Junius, and Wigandus, but also the Lutherans, Hemmingsen and Illyricus, the humanist Erasmus, and, perhaps inevitably—to show his ties to both the early church catholic and to the rediscoveries at the time of the Reformation—the church father Augustine.⁵² Perkins advised the theological student not only to know the definitions, divisions, and properties of “the substance of Divinity” but also, in a way reminiscent of Chaderton’s “conference” (noted above), told them to read diligently the Scriptures “in this order: using gramaticall, rhetoricall, and logicall analysis, and the helpe of the rest of the arts.”⁵³

Since the “aim” was “to save souls,” however, Perkins exhorted would-be preachers to “conceal the arts” when delivering the message to the people from the pulpit. He urged that “plaine speech” should proceed from the pulpit and warned against “the least ostentation.” Preaching must be “spiritual and gracious...simple and perspicuous,” for the preacher’s purpose in proclamation was the “hiding of humane wisdom and the demonstration and showing of the Spirit.” Perkins nevertheless also condemned “barbarisme...in the pulpit” and extolled the “arts, Philosophy, and a variety of reading whilest...framing the sermon” as not only laudatory but necessary.⁵⁴ A concern for a fully learned but also clear and vigorous evangelical rhetorical eloquence ruled the day.

The most notable and vivid episode involving this “plain style” and these Cambridge brothers occurred in the aftermath of a 1611 Cambridge sermon by John Cotton, and involved not only Cotton but also Sibbes and Preston. Although at the time a fellow of Emmanuel

Devoted Life: An Introduction to the Puritan Classics (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 38–51.

52. Perkins, “Arte of Prophesying,” in *Works*, 2:762. Breward helpfully lists the exact works from all of the authors named by Perkins: “Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Bk. IV; N. Hemmingsen, *The Preacher*, 1576; A. Hyperius, *The Practis of Preaching*, 1577; D. Erasmus, *Ecclesiastae*, Basle, 1535; J. Wigandus, *In XII Propbetas Minores Scripturae*, Basle, 1567; T. Beza, *Tractiones Theologiae*, Geneva, 1570–1582, together with the edition of the Bible in which he, Tremellius, and Junius collaborated” (Ian Breward, general introduction to *The Arte of Prophesying*, in William Perkins, *The Work of William Perkins*, ed. Ian Breward (Appleford, U.K.: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1971), 329).

53. Perkins, “Arte of Prophesying,” in *Works*, 2:756–57.

54. *Ibid.*, 2:756–62.

College—that “Puritan seedbed” founded by Walter Mildmay in 1584 with Perkins’s former tutor, Laurence Chaderton, as its first master⁵⁵—Cotton had gained a reputation for his use of a more ornate pulpit eloquence style than typical for one deemed a Puritan. Yet Cotton also had been undergoing a re-examination of his views about preaching, and even Christian commitment itself, through listening to Richard Sibbes at nearby Holy Trinity during the years previous to this famous sermon delivered at St. Mary’s, Cambridge. With a large congregation eagerly awaiting another oratorical gem for which Cotton had become known, Cotton shocked them by preaching in the “plain style.” He returned to his room dejected; the audience had received the sermon with scorn (the students even pulled their caps down over their ears in disgust). “But lo,” Cotton’s seventeenth-century biographer John Norton recorded, “Master Preston knocks at his door, and coming in, acquaints him with his spiritual condition, and how it pleased God to speak effectually unto his heart by that Sermon.”⁵⁶ Since coming to Christ in faith served as a, if not the, primary purpose of preaching—“Then faith is by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17, Geneva Bible)—Cotton knew in his mind and heart that God now called him to the “plain [but still definitely learned] style.”

The heightened awareness of some of the techniques derived from Renaissance humanist techniques and principles of understanding and interpreting texts, seen most notably in their Bible study and sermon preparation methods as well as their concern for a proper spiritual rhetoric, combined therefore with the brothers learning through the older medieval scholastic methodology. Even when more recent scholars show examples of Renaissance humanistic practice discovered in previously unread “Puritan” student notebooks, or they re-evaluate the

55. On Emmanuel College, see E. S. Shuckburgh, *Emmanuel College* (London: F. E. Robinson & Co., 1904).

56. John Norton, *Abel Being Dead Yet Speaketh: Or, the Life and Death of that Deservably Famous Man of God, Mr. John Cotton* (London, 1658), 13–14. Preston’s student and biographer, Ball, also repeatedly returned to this event as marking a watershed in Preston’s life. See Ball, *Life of the Renowned Doctor Preston*, 16–21, particularly 21: “Mr. Cotton’s sermon had so invaded him, that Kings and Courts were no such great things to him, especially when he understood y^e [that] another was resolved on for answerer.” For a modern telling of this story, see Ziff, *Career of John Cotton*, 28–33. Ziff writes on 32: “That afternoon the near miracle occurred which confirmed John Cotton in his Puritanism forever.”

writings of the Cambridge Puritan divines themselves through a recognition that they did concur with some of the ways of learning provided by a Renaissance humanist like Erasmus, such must be tempered with the fact that they did indeed learn and use the scholastic method. For them it tended thus to be a both/and proposition rather than an either/or when it came to help in training the mind and bringing a learned ministry. Preston, for example, exemplified a particular love for the older scholastic emphasis on disputation—even to the point of using it humorously. Once, before King James, Preston won the favor of the monarch by arguing that dogs could practice syllogistic reasoning, even using the king’s favorite hounds as his example.⁵⁷

What probably should be inferred from all of this is that scholars must exercise caution when trying to determine the precise “educational school” to which these Cambridge Protestants belonged. Costello’s declaration that they were “Protestant and scholastic” to the point of not only “understanding” but also “holding with” some Roman Catholic neo-scholastics⁵⁸ cannot be regarded as adequate. Todd writes: “‘Understood,’ yes, but ‘held with’?... There is considerable evidence that students and their tutors viewed the reading of neo-scholastics as a necessary evil and many students questioned how necessary it was.”⁵⁹ Perkins’s disciple Samuel Ward, who would later serve as an English representative at the Synod of Dort and who sided with the Royalists during the Civil War,⁶⁰ copied approvingly in a notebook a letter that recommended that students certainly read the Jesuits (leading Roman Catholic neo-scholastics), but also that they “‘resolve clean contrary to that which they say.’”⁶¹ Perkins himself lamented in “An Exposition of the Whole Epistle of Jude” that “some of our students...have addicted themselves to studie Popish writers...despising in the meantime those famous instruments and cleare lights whom the Lord raised up for the reforming of true religione, such as Luther, Calvin, Bucer, Beza,

57. Ball, *Life of the Renowned Doctor Preston*, 21–27.

58. Costello, *Scholastic Curriculum*, 121.

59. Todd, *Christian Humanism*, 73.

60. For a brief biography of Ward, see Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward, *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, ed. M. M. Knappen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1933), 37–52.

61. Samuel Ward, Sidney Sussex, Ward MS 1, in Todd, *Christian Humanism*, 76.

Martyr, &c., which argueth that their mindes are alienated from the sinceritie of the truth.”⁶²

These spiritual brothers from Cambridge were most definitely Protestant in inclination and they certainly were trained in a somewhat scholastic-style Protestant divinity as well as knowledgeable of scholastic learning methods of the Middle Ages. Yet they also borrowed from humanistic practices and they definitely valued the church fathers. Thus, Perkins and the others were not innovators in the precise scholarly method as they sought to bring forth a learned ministry, and indeed their tastes in educational practice proved eclectic. They adhered to no one educational method in its entirety, whether that of Thomas, Erasmus, Beza,⁶³ or Ramus, to teach them how to handle what they deemed most important—Scripture.

Indeed, as “Protestants of the hotter sort,” they believed the Scriptures themselves stood as *the* bellwether by which to evaluate all

62. Perkins, “An Exposition of the Whole Epistle of Jude,” in *Works*, 3.2.552.

63. Some scholars go too far in making a “Beza-Perkins” tradition. While it cannot be denied that Beza, along with his so-called scholastic style, had considerable influence on Perkins and the other Cambridge brothers, so too did a variety of thinkers. Indeed, while caution has already been made as to the overvaluing of Ramus on thinkers such as Perkins, it cannot be denied that Ramus did have some influence. Interestingly, Beza however repudiated Ramism, even refusing Ramus a teaching post at the Geneva Academy. On Beza and Ramus, see Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence*, 20.

Even if one wishes to stress the “scholasticism” of the spiritual brotherhood’s theological method, one should be careful not to assume too quickly that they learned this method directly from Beza. The scholastic method was a part of the very staple of their educational diet at Cambridge and did not need to be imported from Beza’s Geneva. Indeed, the scholastic style continued to have an important influence on the Continent itself in the various Protestant traditions even prior to Beza. What Roland Bainton argued over fifty years ago still has some value, if taken in light of other findings on the rise of humanism and other new learning—namely, that as to the Reformation and scholasticism: “One would look for the greatest break, but in vain. The essential structure of medieval thought was retained.... The greatest change is in turning theology away from itself and subordinating it to religious interests.... The result was a simplification, not an abandonment of the main lines of scholastic theology” (Roland Bainton, “Changing Ideas and Ideals in the Sixteenth Century,” *Journal of Modern History* 8 [1936]: 441).

Alister McGrath has helped students of the Reformation period enormously by showing the complexity of the intellectual origins of Reformation thought. Indeed, his work influenced my thinking in the preparation of this chapter on the complexity of later Reformation and post-Reformation thought in England (Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* [Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1987]).

doctrinal and practical concerns. No standards of logic, ways of educational practice, traditions of looking at some issue, or human voice stood above the Bible. The Bible served as the sole final and only infallible authority in all matters of faith and practice, since the Bible came from God through His called and chosen servants by the inspiration of the Spirit. Ways of learning, human reason, religious traditions, and church authority all might prove helpful, but all were subservient to Scripture. Perkins wrote that since the Bible was “canonical,” it alone was “where the truth is first to be found out and also afterwards to be examined.” Thus, all questions of “doctrine and worship” must appeal to it for “the supreme and absolute determination and judgment.”⁶⁴ Therefore, while he argued on the one hand that “Religione hindereth not humane learning as some fondly think; but it is a furtherance and helpe, or rather a perfection of humane learning,”⁶⁵ he also warned university theologians: “Now [in the university] we have many occasions to be puft up in self-conceit: we see ourselves grow in time, in degree, in learning, in honour, in name and estimation: . . . What can all of these be but so many baits to allure us to pride and vaine opinions of our own worth?”⁶⁶

Sibbes, master of Cambridge’s St. Catherine’s Hall, reflected upon this same theme in his “Divine Meditations and Holy Contemplations”: “No man is a true divine but the child of God. He only knows holy things by a holy light and life. . . . No natural man, though he be never so great a scholar, knows these things experimentally; . . . It is a great scandal to religion that men of great learning and parts are wicked men; . . . though they know [divine mysteries] in the brain, yet secretly they make a scorn of conversion and mortification.”⁶⁷

Thus, although they all recognized great value in “humane learning,” such learning had its limits. Morgan considers this the brotherhood’s “schizoid attitude” toward the relationship between “reason and enthusiasm”: “Only by casting off the chains forged by the overreliance on reason, and by entering the higher sphere of enthusiasm, could

64. Perkins, “Arte of Propheying,” in *Works*, 2:731.

65. Perkins, “A Cloude of Witnesses Leading to Heavenly Canaan,” in *Works*, III:2.9.

66. Perkins, “On the Calling,” in *Works*, 3:2.442.

67. Richard Sibbes, “Divine Meditations and Holy Contemplations,” in *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes* (Edinburgh, 1862–1864), 7:200–201.

Puritans come to a comprehension of their own being.”⁶⁸ While Morgan’s explanation of a tension found in Puritanism between “reason and enthusiasm” certainly has merits, his choice of “enthusiasm” as one side of the tension is unfortunate. “Enthusiasm,” like “Puritanism,” carries with it pejorative overtones, while his denominating “faith” as “the non-rational aspect of human existence” mistakes the brotherhood’s fervency of faith for irrationalism.⁶⁹ Faith, as will be seen in the ensuing chapters, always related to the illumination by the Spirit and using the Word on the mind, as well as sealing that Word to the heart. Using Preston to illustrate, he argued that the Holy Spirit brought “the will and affections to embrace the truth [of the Scriptures]” by communicating “light...unto [a person] by the understanding.”⁷⁰

Even more eloquent, and no less passionate, was Sibbes: “That which reason should do here is to stoop to faith in things that are altogether above reason.... Faith is the reason of reasons in [divine] things, and the greatest reason is to yield to God that hath revealed them.... [God] hath said it, therefore reason itself saith, it is the greatest reason to yield to God, who is truth itself. Therefore faith stands with the greatest reason that can be.”⁷¹ While Morgan recognizes the place the brothers gave to reason, as well as their primary concern at this point being the desire not to have a reason undisciplined in scriptural reflection usurp the place of faith,⁷² he probably could have strengthened his argument by talking of faith as superrational (above reason and guiding reason) rather than nonrational (which seems to imply nonreasonable at best or irrational at worst). Indeed, Morgan admits at the end of his book: “Puritans thus contributed to the final flowering of a tradition attempting to blend faith and reason...into a Christian balance, something which had been the chief intellectual enterprise of Western Europe for the previous millennium-and-a-half.”⁷³

In this same regard, some mention should be made of Bozeman’s designation of the Puritans (in which he certainly includes the divines

68. John Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 64, 301. Morgan devotes two chapters, 3 and 4 (62–94), and his conclusion (301–10), to a discussion of this dialectic of reason and faith.

69. *Ibid.*, 77.

70. John Preston, *Sinnes Overthrow* (London, 1633), 56.

71. Sibbes, “A Fountain Opened,” in *Complete Works*, 5:467.

72. See John Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 50–56, 95–98, and 227–29.

73. *Ibid.*, 309.

under investigation herein) as “primitivists.” While such a term may have value in understanding some of the cultural-anthropological and sociological underpinnings of the New England way as it related to their “holy experiment” of a “Godly Commonwealth” (Bozeman’s primary interests), it is probably an unfortunate label for their understanding of the relationship of Scripture, faith, and reason. The revelation of God in Scripture had *primacy* in matters of both faith and reason, but the brothers never devalued “humane learning,” exchanging it instead for some “naked Bible [*nuda scriptura*]” ideology. While Bozeman himself appears to recognize this, he would have been better served by a term different from “primitive” for the brothers’ outlook on the relationship between revelation and reason.

As with Morgan’s use of “enthusiasm,” Bozeman’s “primitivism”—when applied to concerns of the Cambridge brotherhood on matters of Scripture, faith, and reason—appears pejorative and even simplistic. It appears to carry with it undercurrents of anti-intellectualism at worst (which Bozeman himself admits never characterized the mainstream Puritans),⁷⁴ or acting as if they themselves somehow were eschewing human learning in favor of seeking some type of “golden age” past. While the Puritans had an extremely high regard for biblical authority, they in fact never denied the usefulness of “humane learning” and also the need to listen to others from before their own time in the Christian tradition. Perhaps, therefore, “primacy” to in-scripturated revelation would be a better designation in regard to matters of faith and reason. Scripture maintained such primacy because it alone served as “the only infallible rule of faith and practice” due to its being special revelation from God, yet such an idea in no way brought a denial by the Cambridge brothers of the value of other learning vehicles that humans have as humans, whether logic, empirical investigation, or social discourse.

Of course, there was a deep problem with the natural faculties. When the Cambridge brothers set limits on the value of reason, logic, human learning, and tradition, such limits arose in conjunction with their view of “natural” human understanding as fallen.⁷⁵ Perkins, in his

74. Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 70.

75. Even Todd in her favorable comparison of Puritan and humanist social practices recognizes that they parted company on many theological points. See Todd, *Christian Humanism*, 95.

famous “A Golden Chaine,” spoke in quite unflattering terms of the human mind apart from grace: “Men’s minds received from Adam: ignorance, namely a want, or rather a deprivation of knowledge in the things of God...; impotence, whereby the mind of itself is unable to understand spiritual things, though they be taught; vanity, in that the mind thinketh falsehood truth and truth falsehood.”⁷⁶ So did Preston: “[If men] thinke there is some goodnesse in them, they will not be persuaded of this Truth...: And therefore when a man comes into a state of grace, it is not mending two or three things that are amisse, it is not repairing of an old house, but all must be taken downe, and be built anew, you must be New Creatures.”⁷⁷ The result: “[Humane] wisdome is not to be glorified in”;⁷⁸ rather, the mind must be regenerated. Sibbes concurred by speaking about what Dever calls a “kind of spiritual second sight”:⁷⁹ “We should have a double eye: one eye to see that which is amiss in us, our own imperfections, thereby to carry ourselves in a perpetual humility; but another eye of faith, to see what we have in Christ.”⁸⁰

On a different but important final note before leaving the concern of the spiritual brotherhood for a learned but also biblically based ministry, some mention should be made regarding their role as Cambridge fellows/tutors because herein one sees practical application of their concerns. All of them served colleges as fellows: Sibbes and Preston became masters of St. Catherine’s and Emmanuel respectively; and Thomas Shepard helped found and served as “unofficial chaplain” of Harvard in the New World. Porter writes: “Cambridge fellows were then ‘tutors’, *in loco parentis*, to an extent unknown today.”⁸¹ As much as the learning of the schools, such tuition nurtured these Reformation-minded divines we know as Puritans in godly discipleship and proved of inestimable worth to them when they left Cambridge for parishes and pastoral ministries elsewhere in England or indeed the New World. Porter argues that Cambridge provided “a world within a world,” and

76. Perkins, “A Golden Chaine,” in *Works*, 1:20.

77. John Preston, *The Saints Qualification* (London, 1637), 39–40.

78. Perkins, “A Commentarie upon the Epistle to the Galatians,” in *Works*, 2:416.

79. Mark E. Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2000), 142.

80. Sibbes, “Bowels Opened,” in *Complete Works*, 2:85. Dever alerted me to this statement (Dever, *Richard Sibbes*, 142).

81. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 236.

Collinson concurs that the brotherhood gave its members “a sense of belonging” for “clerical puritanism was born in the universities.”⁸² Thinkers, who themselves in their reflections on Christian growth saw the “means of grace” flowing from Scripture as crucial toward coming to Christ and growing in Him, would have asked for no greater means in their growth as learned and sound divines than the gift of a good and godly tutor.

Reformed, but Only *Halfie*: Complaints against the Settlement

As we understand how the Cambridge brothers understood the relationship of Scripture, faith, and reason, it helps show us that the brotherhood lived within the Reformation way as those who valued what human learning could do, as long as one set true limits on such learning given human finitude and fallenness—and also as long as one tested human learning through what Calvin called the “spectacles” given by God in Scripture, so we might see aright (a point in which the Cambridge brothers would wholeheartedly agree).⁸³ So too does a tension point between acceptance of the established church as a true church of Christ and a strong dissatisfaction with that church help mark their place in English ecclesial society of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The “complaint literature” produced by these Cambridge divines accorded well with tracts and treatises produced elsewhere against the settlement and society in general.⁸⁴ Bozeman writes of these complaints: “The church’s failure to regenerate and morally order the greatest part of the population came back largely to this: to an attachment to man-made forms with no power to convert and hold a people.”⁸⁵

Complaint against the settlement, of course, took on many forms. Prior to Elizabeth’s decision in the late 1580s to extirpate vocal nonconformists and the subsequent demise of the classical (i.e., presbyterian) movement,⁸⁶ critics often registered dissatisfaction in terms of external

82. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction*, 269; and Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 122, 127.

83. Calvin, *Institutes*, I:vi:i.

84. See Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 199–205, 220–25.

85. Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 77.

86. Handled quite extensively in Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, and Lake, *Moderate Puritans*.

forms, rites, and policies—vestments, liturgical practices considered Romish, and the episcopal polity itself. Whitgift's and then Bancroft's repression of dissidents, which started in the late 1580s and following, forced these Puritan critics underground but did not exterminate them. Brachlow points out that "even outspoken militants like Walter Travers chose to cool their reforming passions in those 'silent' years between 1588 and the renewal of Puritan activism in 1604."⁸⁷

While crushing outward forms of dissent among those who proved nonseparating but also uncomfortable with Elizabeth's religious settlement, the official policies of the late 1580s and following brought to the surface undertones consistently present since 1559. Even during the height of the classical/presbyterian movement among Puritans of the 1560s and 1570s, Collinson writes, "The typical Cambridge puritan was no extremist: practical godliness concerned him more than platforms of church government."⁸⁸ These more central criticisms against the settlement for failure to produce greater piety and evangelical reformation carried with them as strong a warning to the authorities as had any of the warnings against a continuance of episcopacy or set-prayer-book liturgy: without change, God would visit the nation in judgment.

The nation, it must be admitted, was in a confused state brought on by what Curtis calls "the shock of sudden changes": "The shock of sudden changes which had taken the Church of England from obedience to Rome, to Henrician Catholicism, to... [more advanced] Protestantism [under Edward VI], and back to communion with Rome [under Mary Tudor], all within twenty-five years stunned most Englishmen and left them uncertain about matters that were of utmost temporal as well as eternal importance."⁸⁹ The university Puritans sought to bring certainty in a variety of ways, but among the most important was the call for a reformation of the heart with Christ at the center. Such a focus allowed them to remain within the established church and yet rebuke it for its failures.

87. Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, 40.

88. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 128.

89. Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge*, 183. For a study of socioreligious conditions in England throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, see the important study, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 3–24, 51–77, 151–73.

Just as Perkins provides an example of the ambivalent attitude the brothers had toward the label “Puritan,” so too does he provide a benchmark by which to judge their back and forth relationship to the Elizabethan settlement.⁹⁰ Although in the tumultuous years of the Stuart monarchy and the Interregnum he would be remembered more by non-conformists and separatists in England as well as New England than by his own fellow English conformists, Perkins was to become in his own rather special sense as much a theologian of the settlement as a thinker like Hooker.⁹¹ In “Symbol,” he advocated submission to the ecclesiastical laws of the state and repudiated separatism, arguing: “In all things that concern the authority of the magistrate, and belong unto him by the rule of God’s word, we must attempt to do whatsoever we do by leave. And by this we see what unadvised course they take, that being private men in this our church, will notwithstanding take upon them to plant churches without the leave of the magistrate being a Christian prince.”⁹²

Perkins declared in his “Exposition of Jude” that the magistrate was God’s minister “for...the preserving of the welfare of the soul and bodie.” Thus magistrates had the duty to publish “true religione” as well as legislate “civill justice.”⁹³ Perkins also linked the task of the preacher who wielded the “sword of the Spirit” with the magistrate who wielded the “temporall sword”: “unlesse with the sword of the Spirit there be joyned the temporall sword of the Magistrate to reform men’s lives and to keepe them from open sinne against the law of God and to urge them to duties which the minister teacheth: surely their teaching will be to small effect.”⁹⁴ A member of Elizabeth’s inner circle could hardly ask for more from the most vocal Church of England advocate.

90. In his general introduction of his edition of selections from Perkins’s works, Ian Breward also discusses Perkins’s relationship to the established church, and first alerted me to some of the references I will use in the ensuing pages (Breward, general introduction to “The Arte of Propheying,” in Perkins, *Works*, 14–32).

91. For discussions of the influence of William Perkins on his and subsequent generations, see the following: Breward, “Significance”; R. A. Sisson, “William Perkins, Apologist for the Elizabethan Church of England,” *Modern Language Review* 47 (1952): 495–502; and Louis B. Wright, “William Perkins: Elizabethan Apostle of ‘Practical Divinity,’” *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (1940): 171–96.

92. Perkins, “Symbol,” in *Works*, 1:229.

93. Perkins, “Jude,” in *Works*, 3.2.536.

94. Perkins, “Cloude,” in *Works*, 3.2.149.

Nevertheless, Perkins proved to be no Erastian, placing church wholly under state. He limited the extent of the magistrate's authority in matters of religion.⁹⁵ While he could state that magistrates had authority under God "over all causes both civill and ecclesiaticall," he could also contend the following concerns—which themselves had deep roots in Reformation discussions of the relationship between the secular and sacred arms:⁹⁶

But here two differences in this authoritie must be marked: First, that [the] civill authoritie doth not after the same manner order causes ecclesiasticall and civill; for in civill causes it ordereth and executeth all likewise, but in ecclesiasticall it hath power to order all but not to execute them: the Magistrate indeed ordereth and prescribeth in all, but the Minister is he that executeth in ecclesiasticall causes [for]... the civill authoritie hath power over all the things of men, but not over the things of God as the Word, the sacraments, faith, the graces of God in the heart.... Secondly, the authoritie extendeth itself to all persons...but so as it stretcheth only unto the outward man, to the body, life, conversation, and outward things, but not to the souls and conscience, of which God is the one Lord and Governor.⁹⁷

Within this recognition of the magistrate's rights and duties over both civil and ecclesiastical affairs came the warning that the civil authorities must invade neither the minister's duty to interpret and

95. See John D. Eusden, *Puritans, Lawyers, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 32–40.

96. For a discussion of the various positions taken by the Reformers on the question of political authority as it impinged on religious practice, see the following: Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966); Harro Hopfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Alister McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 140–54; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume II: The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); David Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 112–25; and W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 282–310.

In its Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, Cambridge University Press has published a small volume containing translations of Luther's important treatise, "On Secular Authority," and Calvin's discussion of the civil magistrate from Book IV of the 1559 *Institute* (Martin Luther and John Calvin, *On Secular Authority*, ed. Harro Hopfl, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]).

97. Perkins, "Jude," in *Works*, 3.2.536.

proclaim the Word nor the individual's conscience under God to live out the Christian life. To order and even establish the religion of the country was acceptable, but never should the magistrate prescribe the content of the preacher's message. Nevertheless, against those who rejected the magistrate's right under God to establish religion and who desired instead to proclaim freely any religion they wished, Perkins proved even more critical and limited the freedom of individual conscience: "It is not lawfull to grant to any man or any people the libertie of their own conscience in matters of religion, permitting them to professe what religion they will, for how should false prophets be avoided when every man may freely professe what he will in religion?"⁹⁸

Perkins wanted to stay in the middle of a discussion about church and state that ran rampant though Elizabethan England. Still, he faced something of a dilemma even by his own cautious approach. He gave the prince the right to establish the church in the land. He thus tried to stay within comfortable and conformable limits that would protect him if there was any question as to his loyalty. But the prince could not meddle in the teaching of that established church. Herein lay a potential for stress with the Elizabethan court had one wished to make such a point. After all, in the case of Archbishop Grindal, Grindal's famous letter to Queen Elizabeth—which proved one of the main reasons for his suspension from the jurisdictional aspects of his ministry—revolved partially around the issue of just how far the queen could go in making church policy. Grindal even used the church fathers, especially Ambrose, to help his argument.⁹⁹

Perkins made no claim to be following Grindal here, although his language is similar. Possibly because he was more insulated in his university setting rather than a part of the hierarchy, such potentially explosive ideas did not receive the same notice from the Crown as had Grindal's. Like Grindal, Perkins especially allowed the magistrate the freedom to structure the overall procedural discipline of the church. So did Sibbes and Preston, although Baynes would prove more recalcitrant. In a sermon before King James, Preston stated: "Ministers are

98. Perkins, "Sermon on the Mount," in *Works*, 3.1.236.

99. Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal, 1519–1583: The Struggle for a Reformed Church* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), 233–52.

the vines that bring forth grapes, yet Magistrates are the elms that underprop and hold up the vines.”¹⁰⁰

As for Perkins and the others of this line of (mostly) conforming Puritans, the goal of getting the gospel to the people and having the people as a visible church live more in line with biblical piety formed the goal. Most complaints against the established church went in this direction. Shaw says of Perkins, “Perkins never allowed his attempt to build the kingdom in England to swallow the gospel and replace the building of the kingdom of God.”¹⁰¹ In terms at least of doctrinal judgment and the practical application of it, such concern for the gospel brought him to contend that such was the duty of the clergy who guarded the deposit of truth proclaimed in the Scriptures and systematized in the ancient creeds and the Articles of Religion. But which interpretation? Perkins’s answer: the Reformed, and thus to him the “truly Catholicke,” interpretation. Who made sure that the church established by the magistrate lived according to these Reformed standards?

Perkins avoided answering this. And indeed this could be a potential problem for him and for all the brothers from Cambridge. Although they saw the magistrates wielding a great deal of authority, they also believed that society as a whole should be “reformed according to the Word of God.” Hence, Shaw continues, “There was enough confusion between the two kingdoms that [Perkins] would pass on a mixed legacy to his heirs.... From the Puritan perspective, the great strength of [Perkins’s] public ethics is the reminder that the Word of God must direct the public affairs of all men, that human autonomy in any department of life is sin and rebellion, and that the Christian church must ever wrestle with the issues of human cultural activity and seek to relate piety to the public domain.”¹⁰² Most likely, however, should there be any question of a dilemma, they would point back to the Articles of Religion themselves and contend that the Crown should always uphold this statement, which itself they deemed had been built on Scripture as a summary authority for the true religion of the realm. Thus, while these preachers allowed the civil authorities a definite hand

100. John Preston, *Sermons Preached before His Majestie....* (London, 1631), 70.

101. Mark Shaw, “The Marrow of Practical Divinity: A Study in the Theology of William Perkins” (ThD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1981), 284.

102. *Ibid.*

in regulating certain aspects of the outward structuring of the church, these spiritual brothers also insisted that the “church catholic” in England also be a Reformed church—Reformed not only in doctrine but in the call to purity of life.

And what if the magistrate established a church contrary to Reformed principles and piety? Perkins readily answered this dilemma in “Symbol” during the course of his arguments against both Roman Catholics and those Protestants advocating separatism. He contended that separation from a church was sometimes necessary, but only when either “the worship of God” or “the doctrine of religion” was “corrupt in substance.” Moreover, he maintained this overriding principle: “So long as a church makes no separation from Christ we must make no separation from it.” For him, it was not the particular tastes of individual Christians, but a Reformed understanding of Christology and soteriology—as well as Christ’s rule over His body, the church, as its only head—that dictated the aptness of any particular church, whether on a nationwide scale or in a congregational setting, as a corporate member of the true visible Church around the world.

Believing that the established Church of England was a true Christian church, united to Christ in its doctrine and worship, he criticized the new separatist movement: “The practice of such as make separation from us is very bad and schismaticall, considering our churches fail not either in substance of doctrine, or in the substance of the true worship of God.” Defending the validity of the Elizabethan church as both “reformed according to the Word” and part of the visible church catholic, he wrote:

The churches of Helvetia and Savoy, and the free cities of France and the Low Countries and Scotland are to be revered as the true churches of God, as their confessions make manifest. *And no less must we think of our own churches of England and Ireland.* For we hold, believe and maintain and preach the true faith, that is the ancient doctrine of Christ taught and published by the prophets and apostles, as the book of the articles of faith [i.e., The Thirty-Nine Articles] agreed upon in open parliament doth fully show...and hereupon *all the churches of Europe give unto us the hand of fellowship.*

Regarding the claims of the separatists against the established church as of little substance, he rejected their arguments as “paper shot,” and even branded them “excommunicate.”¹⁰³

Perkins proved even more vituperative, however, against Roman Catholicism, calling Romanists “no true sound members of the catholic church, for both in their doctrine and in their worship of God they raze the foundation of religion.”¹⁰⁴ In fact, his polemics against Roman Catholicism continued unabated throughout his writings as he constantly criticized Rome’s teaching in light of his understanding of biblical religion.¹⁰⁵ He even devoted two entire treatises to unpacking the differences between Roman Catholicism and the Reformed faith: one with the intriguing title that showed the Reformation ideal, “The Reformed Catholicke,” and the other a defence of Reformed religion by showing its continuity with the church fathers entitled “A Demonstration of the Forged Catholicism.”¹⁰⁶

Although Perkins held strongly a doctrine of the liberty of the individual conscience under the lordship of the Spirit,¹⁰⁷ he restricted the individual conscience when it came to church membership within the nation. Only one religion for one kingdom: separatist churches and Roman Catholic conventicles alike should be denied visible recognition. In “Galatians,” for instance, Perkins called the Roman Church “no true church” and said concerning toleration of Catholics within England: “The toleration of two religions in one kingdom is the overthrow of peace. Again, Poperie is a religion both hereticall and schismaticall. It

103. All references from Perkins in the previous two paragraphs are from Perkins, “Symbol,” in *Works*, 1:310–12 (emphases mine).

104. *Ibid.*, 312.

105. In his introduction to a modern edition of Perkins’s treatises on conscience, Thomas Merrill regards Perkins’s strong polemics against Rome as one of the main items that stood him in contradistinction to advocates of the settlement such as Hooker, who, he believes, showed more concern over the problem of Protestant separatism. While such a reading of the situation may have some merit, it needs much more balance. After all, Perkins as a conforming minister strongly repudiated separatism and advocates of the settlement such as Hooker as well as Whitgift and Jewell, who also proved quite critical of Rome. See *William Perkins, 1558–1602, English Puritanist: His Pioneer Works on Casuistry*, ed. by Thomas Merrill (Nieuwkoop, The Netherlands: B. de Graaf, 1966), xvi–xviii.

106. Perkins, “The Reformed Catholicke,” in *Works*, 1:549–618, and “A Demonstration of the Forged Catholicism,” in *Works*, 2:486–600.

107. On the issue of the conscience and its importance for the spiritual brotherhood, see Dever, *Richard Sibbes*, 164–83.

may be said that faith and conscience is free. I answer though faith in the heart and the conscience in the selfe be free in respect of man's authoritie: yet is not the publishing of faith and the profession of conscience free in like suit, but it stands subject to the powers of the magistrate."¹⁰⁸

Obvious differences existed, of course, between the ecclesial path taken by Perkins and that of the great mainstream apologists of Elizabeth's church. Hooker, for example, defended the aptness of the Elizabethan settlement through the use of Scripture, reason, tradition, and practical necessity,¹⁰⁹ whereas Perkins merely lived and worked within it. He never dedicated any specific treatise to justifying the Elizabethan settlement and its liturgical forms or episcopal polity. When he reflected on the corporate functions of the people of God, he most often confined himself to treating how the hearing of the Word preached and the participation in the sacraments helped an individual and a church community grow in grace and love. Indeed, as seen in the quotations above, Perkins spoke as often of English "churches" as he did of the English "Church." Though minor, this emphasis could allow and even lead to a grassroots revolt by particular congregations if they decided that the established system had forgotten them.

While Perkins accepted the established episcopally structured Church in England as a true church, he nevertheless also regularly chastised members within the church. He viewed the problem not in terms of liturgical rites or polity but as a lack of godliness. In "Galatians," first preached in 1599, he lamented that while Reformed religion had been established for "fortie years" (i.e., the 1559 settlement), the majority of the people were more interested in "gaming, drinking, and apparel" than in godly living.¹¹⁰

Focusing on the need for personal spiritual renewal among both the laity and clergy within the Church of England, Perkins's Puritan, Reformation, and renewal-orientated leanings proceeded more along evangelical concerns about true piety rather than as a critique of ecclesial structures. In "A Faithfull and Plaine Exposition Upon the Two

108. Perkins, "Galatians," in *Works*, 2:377.

109. See Richard Hooker, *The Works of Richard Hooker*, 3 vols., ed. Isaac Walton (Oxford, 1793). For modern appraisals of the relationship between Hooker and the Puritans, see Eusden, *Puritans, Lawyers, and Politics*, 15–17, and Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 145–238.

110. Perkins, "Galatians," in *Works*, 2:372.

First Verses of the Second Chapter of Zephaniah,” first preached in 1593 and one of Perkins’s most reformist-oriented sermons, he proclaimed that for “five and thirtie” years God’s Word had been faithfully taught yet ignored by the vast majority of English people: “But now England, how hast thou requited this kindness of the Lord. Certainly even with a greater measure of unkindness, that is with more and greater sins than ever Israel did.... If any man make doubt of this and therefore think I speak too harshly of our church, I will then deal plainly and particularly and rip up the sores of our nation that so they may be healed to the bottom.” Perkins included among these “common sins of England” the problems of “ignorance of God’s will and worship,...contempt of the Christian religion,...blasphemy many ways,... profanation of the Sabbath, [and] unjust dealing in bargaining betwixt man and man.”¹¹¹

Perkins maintained that “without a visible reformation,” God’s judgment against the nation “shall certainly be executed.” The answer for “visible reformation” lay not in separating from the Church of England as the “blind and besotted Brownists” wanted, however, for “our church doubtless is God’s cornfield.” Among this “corn” nevertheless grew much “chaff.” Indeed, since the visible church was “so full of chaff” and the “pure wheat” was so “thin[ly]...scattered,” he continued, “England...must look to be winnowed.” Such winnowing truly took place not in separating from the established church since the “searching” needed “must not be of other men’s hearts and lives, but of our own.”

If those in the visible church did not “fan the flames” of their hearts to faith and repentance when the “word is preached,” however, they could only look forward to a “second winnowing” when God “executeth his vengeance and his judgments on a nation.” Since the “first [winnowing by the Word] hath so long blown in vain [i.e., the “five and thirtie years” reference above]...the second must needs come upon us and it hath already begun to blow.” Into this lamentable situation, Perkins exhorted persons within the visible church to a “visible reformation”: “cry and call for mercy and forgiveness, pray against thy special sins, strive to purge them out as the poison of thy soul, crave grace from God against thy sins.” For when the winds of temporal

111. Perkins, “A Faithfull and Plaine Exposition upon the Two First Verses of the Second Chapter of Zephaniah,” in *Works*, 3.2.423.

judgments blew, “only faith and repentance and the grace of God will stand at that day.”¹¹² Notice that Perkins does not say that human good works will stand; rather, he calls the people to turn from themselves to Christ, who gives forgiveness and also leads them to a new godliness.

Around twenty years later, Richard Sibbes echoed these themes in his series on the Song of Songs, “Bowels Opened.” He blessed God for His mercy and favor to England as a nation: “No nation the like; we are a miracle of the Christian world.” Having richly supplied England for “above threescore year [with] the ministry of the gospel” while other peoples continued “in darkness,” God “knocked at the door” of the nation’s and its citizens’ hearts: “Let us then consider it. The greater means, the greater judgments afterwards, if we be not won by them. Therefore let us labour to hold Christ, to entertain him. Let him have the best room in our souls, to dwell in our hearts.... Let us take notice, therefore, of all the means God useth to the State, and to us in particular, and every one labour to amend one. Every soul is the temple, the house, Christ should dwell in.”

Sibbes preceded this call to Christ with the stiff warning: “Those that have neglected heaven and its prerogatives and advantages in this kind, they shall be cast into hell.”¹¹³ Yet amid the warning, the solution posed revolved around holding to Christ, knowing Christ’s gospel, and recognizing that the renewing work came by Christ.

The Cambridge brotherhood’s vision of spiritual renewal within society extended to the clergy as well. This vision came to light in Perkins’s “The Arte of Prophesying.” While he sought to prepare divinity students for a learned ministry, he balanced this with a stress that ministers must “exercise themselves to godliness.” Not only was it necessary to teach correct doctrine and application from the Scriptures in the pulpit and to prepare using all the arts and the best of Protestant divinity and the ancient fathers (particularly Augustine) in the study, pastors must “express by... example [that] which [they] teacheth, as it were by a type.”

At the heart of such piety was the teaching and understanding of law and gospel leading to justification by grace through faith in Christ. Flowing from such new standing before God, however, a recognition arose that the new standing brought with it a new desire to walk in God’s

112. *Ibid.*, 425–26.

113. Sibbes, “Bowels Opened,” 2:65–67.

ways. Perkins therefore rebuked preachers who actually did not know and live the truth of Christ as “wicked [and] . . . not worthy to stand before the face of the most holy . . . God.” Judgment, not approval, awaited them. Concluding his directions on hermeneutics and homiletics, Perkins advised personal examination, earnest prayer, “a good conscience . . . an inward feeling of the doctrine to be delivered . . . the fear of God . . . the love of the people” and a temperate attitude in all relationships.¹¹⁴

Several lines of thought converge at this point, and so one must step back and evaluate these statements in order to understand the tensions this “brotherhood of common concern” faced as they sought to speak to the social and cultural context of their nation. As “Protestants of the hotter sort,” but also loyal subjects of the English Crown, these divines recognized church and society as inextricably intertwined. Separation from the established church would only tear at the fabric of a society that they accepted as “God’s cornfield.” This played an important role in their fulminations against the separatists. They allowed, with the separatists, that the present established church contained many who were not visible saints. Indeed, the church within the overall society was sick, but it was not dead. While on earth, tares would continue to grow among the wheat in any true church. The godly preacher’s task was not to pluck souls out of society, but to strengthen society’s godliness by preaching the gospel and calling for personal renewal within the visible church, trusting all the while to the sovereign work of God by His Spirit to lead people to Christ.

The settlement, with its break from Rome and its Protestant Articles of Religion, gave the preachers their needed evangelical, reformational, and Protestant platform and creed. But exposition and doctrinal propositions formed only half the story. As pastors modeled the doctrines “inwardly,” they served as godly examples to the flock and as faithful witnesses to the goal for all society. Experience of the doctrine to be delivered mattered as much as the care to be taken in framing the discourse. Couched then within what some often see as a somewhat scholastic approach to theology, Perkins and his followers laid the groundwork for a critique both against an arid orthodoxy and against an established church that, however Reformed in principle, turned away from holiness of heart. Developing these habits of the

114. Perkins, “Arte of Prophesying,” in *Works*, 2:758–59.

heart within an established episcopal structure proved by and large acceptable, as long as Reformed doctrine and worship were maintained. But develop they must.¹¹⁵

Although the question of “voluntarism” as it relates to faith will be a continuing subject throughout the rest of the thesis, the preceding discussion of these preachers as reformers within the established church raises an important point. At least in its English experience,¹¹⁶ the spiritual brotherhood spoke to a society in which every member, unless excommunicated, was deemed a member of the covenant people of God. They preached to a nation in which everyone was, at least outwardly, considered a Christian—one within the compass of God’s merciful calling to Christ through the preaching of the Word. Thus the charge that they were “voluntarists” (that is, thinkers who stressed “human willing” to a large measure) must be placed within this cultural context—a context that produced what Collinson terms “secondary voluntarism.”¹¹⁷ In other words, one should expect these conforming and renewal-minded Protestants and, yes indeed, Puritans who were often critical of the status quo to appeal both to the will *and* the mind, along with the expectation of response as God moved in the heart.¹¹⁸ Preaching as a means of grace and for response was viewed as the primary way in which God brought “visible reformation.”

It should also be noted, of course, that apologists for the Elizabethan settlement, such as Whitgift, and vocal separatists, such as Browne,

115. These emphases by members of the spiritual brotherhood led F. E. Stoeffler, in his important study *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, to conclude that they were “Pietists” *avant la lettre*. This monograph has some sympathy with this, as long as “piety” refers to Calvin’s strong definition (see the introduction), and as long as one links the way these spiritual brothers tie the idea of “affectionate piety” to a reformational, indeed Reformed, expression of orthodox biblical thinking (F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* [Leiden: Brill, 1965], 24–108).

116. How appeals to the will affected Cotton and Shepard once in New England, which had an established church in which *only* “visible saints” were members, will be treated briefly in chapter 6.

117. Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 247–64.

118. Of course, such is the nature of preaching as a form of persuasive discourse. Even those who wish to make a discontinuity thesis for the relationship between these English Reformed divines and earlier Reformed thinkers need to recognize that Reformed thinkers such as Calvin also preached with the expectation of response. For a discussion of how Calvin used persuasive rhetoric, see T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Preaching* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 114–28.

also called the English people to greater piety and expected preachers to pursue their ministries with diligence and personal holiness.¹¹⁹ What marked this brotherhood of spiritual preachers as distinct from these others was the intensity of its critique of the established church for its failure to inculcate a reformational piety in the greater part of the population along with its rejection of separatism.

For the brothers who remained in England, the subjects of chapters 2 through 5, the cry for a “visible reformation” was for a “visible reformation” of the heart, not a new ecclesiological policy. These Cambridge preachers sought a revitalization and reformation of piety in the lives of those within a Protestant established church. Favoring a Reformed approach to the study of the Scriptures and a Reformed understanding of the church’s creeds and confessions, they urged the English people to live according to the Reformation principles they had already achieved legally.

119. On Whitgift, see Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 13–70. On the separatists, see Brachlow, *Communion of Saints*, and B. R. White, *English Separatist Tradition*.