Church History 77:3 (September 2008), 574–595.

doi:10.1017/S0009640708001091 Printed in the USA

"Sinne Unfoulded": Time, Election, and Disbelief among the Godly in Late Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century England[1]

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Richard Greenham, rector from 1570 to 1591 at Dry Dayton Church outside of Cambridge, England, once preached a sermon based on I Thessalonians 5:19 ("Quench not the spirit"). Not one to let the brevity of a biblical text limit his own exegesis, Greenham offered up a sermon of nearly seven thousand words that likely took the better part of an hour to deliver. At the heart of Greenham's message was the proposition, "Whether that man which hath once tasted of the spirite may loose it, and have it quenched in him."[2] Greenham was a leading light among "the godly," a group of mostly Cambridge- and Oxford-educated Protestant clergy who, working within the boundaries of the institutional Church, sustained a significant evangelical effort in England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These reformers embraced with some fervor a theology grounded in the veracity of election and reprobation, and worked to instill a like enthusiasm in the general population. In particular, the godly's message focused on how an individual might identify the marks of divine election and gain assurance of salvation.[3]

These reformers have gone by an assortment of names through the centuries. Many modern-day scholars gravitate toward the term "puritan," even as they

[1]This article is based on a paper given in 2005 at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion. The author wishes to thank her fellow panel members for their comments and suggestions.

[2]*The Workes of the Reverend and Faithfull Servant of Jesus Christ M. Richard Greenham, Minister and Preacher of the Word of God* (London: Felix Kingston, 1599), 92. I estimated the sermon's hour length using a formula provided by John Primus in *Richard Greenham: Portrait of an Elizabethan Preacher* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 35.

[3]For a comprehensive statement of the godly's focus on assurance, see Dewey Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525–1695* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982) in which Wallace places assurance within the wider context of a reformed "theology of grace" and argues that the godly focus on predestination was in the service of religious experience, "a theology related to the everyday religious experience of a growing lay clientele who were continually instructed in it by zealous Protestant preachers," 43.

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debate the term's exact definition. The divines themselves categorically rejected such a designation; when referring to themselves they chose "gospellers" or "the godly." Their detractors used "puritan"—more as insult than identifier—and applied it to persons with a wide variety of ecclesiastical, theological, and social concerns. Perhaps this explains why, despite its popularity in modern parlance, "puritan" continues to defy consistent definition. Although historians sometimes use the term to describe those at odds with (or even completely divorced from) the established church, "puritan" can also characterize those Protestants who promoted a particular brand of piety focused on issues of predestination, election, and reprobation, and who sought spiritual regeneration through intense psychological self-examination. This article concerns itself with just such folk, whom Dewey Wallace has described as "a group attempting to draw out all the implications of their piety and theology and to apply them to the English church and nation." Because "puritan" carries with it such disparate meanings, I privilege self-appellation over scholarly terminology and refer to these evangelical clerics as "the godly."[4]

Given the godly's strong commitment to the tenets of double predestination, the answer to Greenham's proposition would seem obvious: if God in his inscrutable wisdom had elected some humans to salvation and condemned others to damnation before the creation of the world, such a system must deny categorically the possibility of temporal change in one's spiritual estate.

[4]*Puritans and Predestination*, xi. For a wide-reaching definition of the term "puritanism," see Patrick Collinson's *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), in which he offers and builds on an understanding of "puritan" as referring to anyone who desired further reform of the church after the Elizabethan Settlement (within such a model, estrangement or separation from the larger religious community need not occur). Peter Lake concurs that many puritans operated well within the boundaries of the established church in *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1983), and joins Wallace in understanding puritanism as a style of piety, "a distinctively zealous or intense subset of a larger body of reformed or Protestant doctrines and positions": see "Defining Puritanism—Again?" *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. Francis J. Bremer (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 4. Collinson also espouses this aspect of puritanism in his later works. In particular, see *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, in which he refers to puritanism as "the full internalization of Protestantism" (London: MacMillan, 1988), 95. Many scholars who concentrate on the experiential aspect of puritanism eschew the term altogether. Tom Webster prefers the term "experimental Calvinist" to describe "those who made more than intellectual assent to the dogmas of Calvinist soteriology, predestination, election, and assurance, who made the search for the marks of election central to a practical divinity" (36), in "Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality," *The Historical Journal* 39:1 (1996): 33–56. Likewise, R. T. Kendall regards the term "puritanism" as "generally not very useful" and settles on "experimental predestinarians" in *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 6, 9. For a comprehensive history (and historiography) of the debates over the meanings of "puritanism," see Christopher Durston's and Jacqueline Eales's introduction to their edited volume, *The Culture of English Puritanism* (New York: Saint Martin's, 1996), 1–31.

Obviously, an individual's discernment of his or her spiritual state would take place within a temporal framework; nonetheless, any sort of visitation from the Holy Spirit needs must be permanent. But Greenham goes much further than simply pointing out that human perception was subject to the limits of time. In his sermon on the quenching of the spirit, Greenham proclaims:

> There is a lyghter and a lesser working of the spirite, which may be quenched in them that have it. . . . Even they that have bin inlyghtned, and that have receaved heavenly gyftes, and have tasted of the power of the lyfe to come, even such may fall away, and have the spirite quenched in them.[5]

The Holy Spirit might offer a glimpse of eternal life, only to take it away.

Greenham was far from alone in this assessment. Charles Richardson, a London preacher and staunch advocate of the doctrine of predestination ("There was never any man that was the true child of God . . . that ever fell away finally"), nonetheless allowed that "there is indeed a faith that may be lost."[6] William Perkins, a prolific and influential theologian in Elizabethan England—and perhaps the best-known of the godly divines—describes those who labor under this "lyghter and lesser" conviction: "They have in their hearts some good motions of the Holy Ghost to that which is good . . . and they doe beleeve. But these good motions and graces are not lasting, but like the flame and flashing of strawe and stubble; neither are they sufficient to salvation."[7] In text after text produced by the godly, warnings abound that those Christians who had become reasonably assured of their election might one day wake to find they had been mistaken. "Temporary faith," as this phenomenon often was called, appeared for all intents and purposes identical to the saving faith of the elect; the difference lay in its transitory nature.

This essay examines the discourse of temporary faith (and its converse, temporary unbelief) found in the godly literature. The texts under investigation here are the written remains of the godly's evangelical efforts—sermons, catechisms, devotional tracts, polemical treatises, and the like—that flourished as cheaper and more efficient printing and publishing techniques allowed the godly divines to evangelize in print as well as the pulpit.[8] These

[5] *Workes*, 92–93.

[6] *The Repentance of Peter and Judas* (London: William Stansby, 1611), 53–54.

[7] William Perkins, *A Treatise Tending Unto a Declaration Whether a Man Be in the Estate of Damnation or in the Estate of Grace* (London: R. Robinson, 1590), Letter to Reader. For a summary of Perkins's publishing career, see W. B. Patterson, "William Perkins as Apologist for the Church of England," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57:2 (April 2006), 252–269.

[8] From 1560–1570, 9 sermons were published in London; from 1570–1580, the number increased to 69. One hundred thirteen sermons were published between 1580 and 1590, and 140 sermons were published in the final decade of the sixteenth century: see Alan Fager Herr, *The Elizabethan Sermon: A Survey and Bibliography* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylania, 1940), 27. I. M. Green's statistics on the publication of "catechisms or catechetical works, or new translations of the same" shows a total of 217 works published between 1560 and 1609. The

texts presented godly soteriology in lay terms, and in particular articulated English Calvinist notions of sin, repentance, and election in rhetoric designed for "the common sort of Christians," as they sought to protestantize their readers by offering functional models and methods by which the pious Protestant might ascertain whether he or she had been included among the ranks of God's elect. In the process, these texts also introduced a temporal element into an event that ostensibly had happened before and outside of time. In the course of the godly evangelical movement, this temporality served as both stick and carrot, frightening some out of religious self-satisfaction, and comforting others during spiritual desolation.[9]

Temporary faith stands in some ways as a uniquely English Calvinist feature. To be sure, John Calvin had asserted a version of temporary faith in the *Institutes* when he examined how humans come to know divine grace through faith. Calvin acknowledged that the non-elect could experience a sort of "shadow faith," and give "some kind of assent" to the notion of Christ as the author of life and salvation. Calvin also went on to declare that this assent "by no means penetrates to the heart, so as to have a fixed seat there."[10] However, Calvin

1580s proved the most prolific decade, with 68 new publications appearing. But business remained brisk; in the 1590s, 40 new works were published, and 49 new works saw the light of day between 1600 and 1609. These statistics do not reflect reprints, which were frequent. Tessa Watt's *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) remains a valuable resource for understanding the relationship between print and religious culture.

[9]Of course, one might wonder why these godly Protestants felt the need to evangelize at all; England officially had been Protestant from the time of the Elizabethan Settlement. Despite legislated reform, however, the godly never were convinced that the English people had embraced Protestantism with sufficient commitment. "Poperie denied with the mouth abides still in the heart," lamented Perkins in *A Reformed Catholike* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1598), 151. Many of the godly's evangelical efforts sought to dislodge lingering Roman Catholic religiosity from the hearts and minds of their audiences. For more on the Elizabethan Settlement—the name commonly given to a set of 1559 statutes nullifying Mary Tudor's efforts to reunite England with Rome, and establishing Elizabeth as the "Supreme Governour" of the English church, see Michael Graves, *Elizabethan Parliaments 1559–1601* (London: Longman, 1996), 24–27, and Norman Jones, *Faith by Statute: Parliament and the Settlement of Religion, 1559* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1992). See also Jones's article on the Elizabeth Settlement in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2:36–38. Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992) is perhaps the best-known work to argue that the Protestant Reformation was an unwanted imposition on the English people. See also J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), and Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Duffy's article "The English Reformation After Revisionism" offers an astute analysis of the various current opinions on how, when, and why England did turn to Protestantism (*Renaissance Quarterly* 59:3 [Fall 2006]: 720–731).

[10]*Institutes*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 3.2.10. For a thorough treatment of temporary faith in Calvin's writings, see David Foxgrover,

never advocated the sustained investigation into the tenor and tone of one's personal faith that so marked godly piety. For the godly, however, discerning one's status within the predestinarian system was necessary; indeed, the willingness to undergo the investigation indicated elect status, while unwillingness indicated that the individual had but a "temporary faith."[11]

Ascertaining personal assurance of salvation stood at the center of godly practical divinity. As Protestants, the godly held that salvation came only through an individual's faith in the salvific quality of Christ's death and resurrection. As predestinarians, they held that God extended his grace and granted that saving faith only to those whom he had predestined to be saved. Salvation could not be earned, but might (and should) be discerned. Godly descriptions of this process of discernment are by no means identical (and, as Dewey Wallace notes, explanations aimed at the laity tended toward simplification), but virtually all of them delineated a process by which the individual first became aware of personal sin, subsequently experienced sorrow over his or her shortcomings, and commenced to suffer fear of God's righteous wrath. Thus did one's soul "prepare" for grace, and await regeneration. Grace would indeed visit upon the elect, and remove eternal punishment. Continued grace "assured" the individual of inclusion among the elect, and established that he or she did indeed possess saving faith. Sanctification (the desire and ability to live a godly life) and glorification (the completion and full realization of salvation) would ultimately follow.[12]

"'Temporary Faith' and the Certainty of Salvation," *Calvin Theological Journal* 15:2 (November 1980), 220–232.

[11]R. T. Kendall maintains that Perkins and others derived their ideas about temporary faith from Theodore Beza, not John Calvin. According to Kendall, Calvin held that while Christ died for all, all do not receive him. Consequently, Christ does not advocate for all; those for whom he does not advocate are (preordained) reprobate. Beza modified this to argue that Christ died only for the elect. Consequently, under Calvin's system, faith in the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection was tantamount to assurance of salvation; not so with Beza. This separation of faith from assurance results in an articulated doctrine of temporary faith, which stands, in Kendall's view, as "the embarrassment, if not the scandal, of English Calvinism": *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, 7, and passim. Richard Mueller offers a slightly different viewpoint, arguing that Calvin did embrace a doctrine of limited atonement, and that Perkins put Christology, rather than predestinarian doctrine, at the center of his theology in *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988).

[12]Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 50. For a discussion of the variations among the godly ministers, see Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Stuart England*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 111–112. Norman Pettit offers an analysis of the role of preparation in godly soteriology in *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966). For a full treatment of the godly *ordo salutis*, see Charles Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), especially chapter 3,

Practically speaking, within this system "faith" and "assurance" were synonymous. Faith was the very thing that gave the believer confidence that he or she stood justified before God. To believe was to be assured. Equating faith with assurance was not without complication, however. If one did not feel "assured" of salvation, one might not possess saving faith. Michael Winship has argued that the godly's practical piety responded to this by weakening the link between faith and assurance, and crafting a new understanding of faith.[13] Although still espousing the process described above, in their capacity as pastors the godly offered a version of faith that one could recognize and identify without actually "feeling" it. Evidence for this faith could be internal or external to the believer. External signs—good works, or even good fortune—indicated that the individual had been sanctified by God's grace, and—since grace could not take effect without faith—the godly could "work backward" from sanctification and arrive at saving faith.[14]

Internal evidence was trickier. One looked inward, and scrutinized one's claim to faith, but not necessarily to experience it directly or more fully. Faith, no longer confined to the experiental realm, nonetheless underpinned other affective experience. In the absence of experiental faith, the individual looked for evidence of faith in various other emotive religious experiences, that is, remorse over sin, an affinity for hearing and reading the Word,

"The Way of Salvation, the Power of Faith," 75–110. Cohen discusses regeneration in covenantal terms; a covenant of grace that God initiates and extends (only) to the elect facilitates salvation and ushers in a second covenant, the covenant of works (or sanctification). For more on the covenantal aspects of godly piety, see John von Ruhr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought*, American Academy of Religion Studies in Religion 45 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). Also, Peter Lake offers astute analysis of the godly's stages of faith in *Moderate Puritans*, especially 156–162.

[13]Michael Winship, "Weak Christians, Backsliders, and Carnal Gospelers: Assurance of Salvation and the Pastoral Origins of Puritan Practical Divinity in the 1580s," *Church History* 70:3 (September 2001): 462–481. Winship argues that although earlier godly divines began to posit non-experiential evidence for faith, it was Perkins who bestowed a "precise ontological reality" (474) onto faith and allowed the individual to focus on sanctification. This was part of a larger strategy for dealing with "weak Christians," whom the godly saw as impediments to their evangelical agenda.

[14]David Como's section on "Faith and Works" in *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 123–127, offers a useful overview for how sanctification worked in the godly's soteriology. For a variety of commentary, see Cohen, *God's Caress*, 115–117, Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, 64–65, 209–213, and Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 160–165. Cohen sees sanctification as the subject of the second covenant between God and the elect, "the covenant of works," and argues that good works did not play a major role in ascertaining election, overshadowed as they were by the growing inner consciousness of God's mercy. Lake makes the case that good works, while essential to the godly discernment process, nonetheless could not be imbued with any absolute value, and could sharpen as well as allay anxiety. Kendall argues that godly emphasis on sanctification essentially re-introduced human will into the salvation equation, undermining the covenant of grace.

a longing to know Christ's mercy. These all might indicate a faith not currently in experiental evidence, but present nonetheless, with all potential for abundant growth.

This approach certainly could ameliorate a number of fears about salvation. Doubt could be interpreted as a sign of faith; even a slight inclination toward God could demonstrate God's very presence. But this approach did not mitigate the fact that ascertaining election was a solitary task that relied ultimately on subjective conclusions. Anxiety seemed a constant companion for many. The texts under investigation here address that anxiety, and offer various—some might say contradictory—strategies for navigating between the "ongoing dialectic between perceived estrangement and real reconciliation."[15]

I. "Watchful Heedinesse"

The path to assurance was long and exacting, and much of it was devoted to identifying and repenting of sin. The godly required a sustained and often unsettling self-investigation, rooting out and examining one's shortcomings in thought, word, and deed. In the above-mentioned sermon, Greenham preached that "to be rebuked of sinne, is the first worke of the spirit, which the spirit worketh in us by these degrees." In George Gifford's *Countrie Divinitie*, a dialogue that presents godly precepts in a dialogue between the devout Zelotes and the complacent Atheos, Zelotes observes that "when a man knoweth the law, it doth bring him to see that he is altogether corrupted with sinne." "Prepare the secret lodgings of thy heart and soule," advised Joseph Alliston, "to see that nothing be out of order in thy

[15]Peter Iver Kaufman, *Thinking Of the Laity in Late Tudor England* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 17. Scholars disagree on whether the godly's strategies actually offered pastoral comfort. Kendall deems the whole approach "pastorally insensitive" (7) and blames the theory of limited atonement that crept (but not from Calvin) into English Calvinism for emptying the godly message of any real solace. Theodore Dwight Bozeman attributes "an elaborate preoccupation with the self and its conflicted passage through a lifelong, often anxious venture of transformation, self-reproach, and -control" to the godly penitential program in *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion & Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 72. In contrast, in "The Logic of Assurance in English Puritan Theology" (*The Westminster Theological Journal* 52 [1990], 247–261), R. M. Hawkes argues that "the continuing application of the work of Christ in the life of the believer" was a process of self-discovery, understood by its practitioners as a "developing communication with God" (251–252). Likewise, Cohen maintains that divine love, not divine wrath, fueled godly piety: *God's Caress*, 21–22. The seventh chapter in Lake's *Moderate Puritans*, "Puritan Practical Divinity," 116–168, gives a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of how the bond between God and humans "provided a major element in the subjective experience of the godly," 123. Lake reminds us that Christ, not the divine decree of election, was what the godly yearned to know, and what provided mediation between the "objective realm of right doctrine and the subjective realm of true belief": 168.

whole man, that no uncleannesse nor any thing which is any way polluted remaine within."[16]

Sin did not always surface easily. Greenham spoke of "secret sinnes, which are hidden as it were, in the darke corners of our hartes." Gifford's Zelotes attributed his "secret sinnes" to an imperfect understanding of God's laws and, as he explained to his recalcitrant conversation partner, "For these I do earnestly intreate the Lord to make them knowne to me." Hidden sin could convince outside observers—and the sinner him or herself—that all was well, lulling the penitent into a false sense of security. "Yet," Greenham warns, "The hidden corruption of our nature may threaten some hanous downefall in time to come."[17]

Uncovering sin might indeed prove arduous, but the godly penitent not only needed to uncover the iniquity but also needed to scrutinize his or her attitude toward the iniquity. Establishing and maintaining the correct outlook was key, as it could confirm the presence of saving faith. Certainly a "godly sorrow" was appropriate. Greenham's sermon on Thessalonians 5:19 included the following advice for those who wished to know whether their sins indicated that the Spirit had passed them by:

> let us see what likeing, or misliking we have of sinne: for if after our fall we do hold our former hatred of sinne . . . undoubtedly, that frailtie hath not as yet deprived us of the Spirit. Secondly, come and see how it standeth with thy sorrow, for so long as thy sorrow encreaseth for thy sinnes, it cannot be thought that sinne and the flesh have overcome and utterly quenched the spirit there.[18]

Gifford's Zelotes concurred, arguing that "those which are pricked and wounded with their sinnes are in the way to repentance, when the others are farre off."[19] The godly individual could, in fact, take solace in a facility for mournful introspection. "If we mislike ourselves for our sinnes, and mourne striving against them, we may take sound comfort therein," wrote Greenham in a treatise aimed at those looking to relieve the burden of their sins.[20] William Burton, the Oxford-educated vicar of St Giles in Reading, offered this pithy summary: "The children of God are most happie when they seeme to be most miserable."[21]

[16]George Gifford, *A Countrie Divinitie* (London: Richard Field, 1598), 56. Joseph Alliston, *The Exercise of True Spirituall Devotion* (London: Felix Kingston, 1610), 116.

[17]"Secret sinnes" is from Greenham's *Workes*, 126. *Countrie Divinitie*, 104. "Hidden corruption" is from Greenham's *Two Treatises for the Comforting of an Afflicted Conscience* (London: Bradocke, 1598), 95.

[18]*Workes*, 90.

[19]*Countrie Divinitie*, 57.

[20]*Two Treatises for the Comforting*, 284.

[21]William Burton, *Conclusions of Peace, Betweene God and Man* (London: John Hardie, 1594), ii. For a thorough analysis of how sorrow figured in godly piety, see Peter I. Kaufman, *Prayer, Despair, and Drama* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

To be "pricked and wounded" over sin was indeed a good beginning, but only just. The godly penitent also needed to establish that he or she was laboring under the proper *kind* of sorrow. Greenham's sermon on the "lyghter and lesser" working of the spirit has this to say:

> Not the godly onely, but the wicked also are greeved when they have sinned. But the wicked do therefore sorrow because their sinne hath, or will, bryng some punishment uppon them. And the godly sorrow because they have offended God and have gevin him occasion to draw his favour from them.[22]

As Perkins noted, *worldly* sorrow is "a griefe arising of the apprehension of the wrath of God & other miseries . . . whereas the *godly* sorrow causeth griefe for sinne, because it is sinne."[23] Consequently, the examination of one's iniquity needed to be accompanied by a comprehensive encounter with (and analysis of) one's emotional reaction to the sin in order to establish that one's sorrow and regret sprang from saving faith.

Hardly pleasant; nonetheless, identifying and cultivating godly sorrow stood as the evidence for God's healing mercy. The sorrow of the godly ultimately brought them closer to Christ: "Hee presseth us that we might cry, we cry that we may be heard, we are heard that we might be delivered."[24] But those who had been denied eternal salvation could not complete the process; their cries were not heard, nor were they delivered. Accordingly, the unredeemed were wont to plunge into an abiding despair. Despair bespoke a lack of trust in God's mercy—"Not the sight of our sinnes, but the want of faith in the merits of Christ's death breedeth despair"[25]—and continuing despair indicated a permanent breach with the Almighty. Continued and conscientious analysis of the origin and affect of each and every sin was the only way for the godly penitent to distinguish between the (temporary) saving sorrow of the elect and the (permanent) damning despair of the reprobate.[26]

[22] *Workes*, 96.

[23] William Perkins, *Two Treatises I. Of the Nature and Practise of Repentance. II. Of the Combat of the Flesh and Spirit* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1593), 4.

[24] Arthur Dent, *The Plaine Man's Path-Way to Heaven* (London: Robert Dexter, 1601), 123.

[25] William Burton, *Certaine Questions and Answeres, Concerning the Knowledge of God* (London: John Windet, 1591), 68.

[26] Some historians argue that the distinction between godly sorrow and reprobate despair was lost on most people, which plunged well-meaning Christians into paroxysms of hopelessness. See John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991). Peter Kaufman argues to the contrary, maintaining that godly sorrow was not a self-annihilating experience but a performative and purgative episode, a mechanism by which the penitent might "reach the other side" and reside in God's grace: *Prayer, Despair, and Drama*, 41–92. See also Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 12.

Godly penitents submitted to a program by which they might identify and judge their reactions toward sin, but that very sin had rendered human judgment unreliable. "We are so readie to deceive ourselves," observed Greenham, "and to thinke wee love the word when wee doe not, and doe perswade our selves in our owne imaginations that wee have laide fast holde of wisedome, when in deede we have neither touched nor tasted it."[27] Scripture demanded "watchfull heedinesse and heedie watchfulnesse" so that humans could assess correctly their inner workings. A cursory examination of one's conscience might render mistaken notions about one's true spiritual condition: "Take heede, O man, that thy manhood be not malice, that thy good husbandry be not greedy covetousness, that thy good fellowship be not beastlinesse."[28]

The best defense against such misreading was frequent inspections of one's soul with an emphasis on increasing thoroughness and specificity. "Our repentance must be alwaies," argued Essex preacher Nathaniel Cole: "Every day, every weeke, every month, every yeere, constantly and perpetually to repent."[29] William Perkins recommends:

> Make catalogues and bills of thine own sins, specially of those sins that have most dishonoured God and wounded thine own conscience. Set them before thee often, specially when thou hast any particular occasion of renewing thy repentance, that thy heart by this doleful sight may be further humbled.[30]

A perpetual investigation of sin, accompanied with an ongoing analysis of the depth and character of one's emotional reaction to sin, lay before those who would follow the godly's exhortations to repentance and renewal.

II. "Right Temporizers"

If we can believe the godly's complaints about their audience, many Christians did not see the need for this kind of rigor. Perkins lamented that too many people considered themselves well-churched if they could "recite the [Apostle's] Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments"— hardly the level of commitment demanded by the godly. Perkins also admonished those Christians who indulged in what he called "mattress salvation," that is, they waited until their deathbed to examine their consciences and repent. "This one sin argues the great securitie of this age," complained Perkins,

[27]*Workes*, 173.

[28]William Burton, *Ten Sermons Upon the First, Second, Third and Fourth Verses of the Sixt of Mathew* (London: Thomas Man, 1602), 12–13.

[29]Nathaniel Cole, *The Godly Man's Assurance* (London: Richard Woodruffe, 1615), 149.

[30]William Perkins, "A Graine of Mustard Seed," in *The Works of That Famous and Worthie Minister of Christ* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1603), 782. Burton, *Certain Questions*, 68.

"and the great contempt of God and his word."[31] Even more troublesome to the godly divines were those "drowsie Protestants" who recognized the benefit of self-examination and repentance and were willing to undergo it before their final hour but balked at the enduring nature of the process as described by the godly. William Burton complains about these one-timers, who "[say] also as that yong bragger in the Gospell, willing to justifie himselfe, *all this have we done*." Persons who were unwilling to persevere were nothing more, Burton scoffed, than "right temporizers."[32]

The godly brandished the "stick" of temporary faith at those temporizers who were unwilling to persevere in the rigorous process that stood at the heart of godly piety: "[The] beginnings of grace are counterfeit, unless they increase," warned Perkins. Thomas Timme concurred: "Grace, if it be not continually nourished and increased by all good meanes which God hath appointed, it will quickly waste and decay exceedingly."[33] Almighty God might have separated the sheep from the goats before and outside of time, but humans discerned their status within a temporal framework. The godly individual was required to persist in this venture. Reluctance was evidence that the person had "heretofore deceived himself and his owne soul, thinking himselfe to be something when he was nothing, and judging farre otherwise of his estate than he ought to have done."[34]

Consequently, the constant rehearsing of one's sins—the "catalogues and bills"—served a dual purpose. They not only guarded against the misperceptions born of sin, but also helped move the penitent toward understanding sin and remorse in very specific and individualized terms. This particularized notion of sin was a central tenet within the godly soteriology. The godly insisted on such specificity, they claimed, because God had done as much when He chose particular individuals to be included in His Kingdom. "The faith of the Elect, or saving faith, is a *certen* perswasion and a *particular* perswasion of remission of sin and of life everlasting," explains William Perkins in his *Discourse on Conscience*; "God

[31]*A Salve for a Sicke Man* (Legate: Cambridge, 1595), 58.

[32]*The Christian's Heavenly Treasure* (London: Thomas Man, 1608), 74–75.

[33]Perkins, "Mustard Seed," in *Workes*, 781. Thomas Timme, *A Silver Watch-Bell* (London: William Jaggard, 1608), 100.

[34]Alliston, *The Exercise of True Spirituall Devotion*, 30. Frank Luttmer sees temporary faith in godly literature not just as a rhetorical threat the godly aimed at recalcitrant Christians, but also as a trope designed to offer weak Christians something with which to compare themselves, and thereby relieve their anxiety, in "Persecutors, Tempters, and Vassals of the Devil: The Unregenerate in Puritan Practical Divinity," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51:1 (January 2000): 37–68. Winship sees the rhetoric of temporary faith rising from practical attempts on the part of the godly, not only to threaten "carnal gospelers," but to account for them to the rest of the godly community, 468–469. Kendall's section titled "William Perkins's Doctrine of Temporary Faith" in *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* remains one of the most comprehensive reviews of temporary faith's theological underpinnings, 67–78.

gives Christ, or at least offereth him, not generally to mankind, but to the severall and particular members of the Church."[35] Burton's catechism offers similar counsel: "It is not enough to know that we are diseased and not well, but we must know a number of diseases to be growing upon us . . . we must know how many parts be infected, and how dangerous the infection is . . . sinne must be uncased and unfoulded in us, and all the branches of sin must be laid open to our consciences."[36] While there were common precepts that all needed to embrace, those precepts needed to be applied particularly and specifically to each individual.

Only a reprobate contented himself with a "generall faith": "Common and generall repentance," scoffed George Gifford, "is not so much as a shadow of true repentance."[37] In Greenham's sermon on Thessalonians 5:19 he concurs, claiming that the elect Christian always needs to experience "a speciall griefe for speciall sinnes."[38] He describes those who have "a confused and a generall knowledge" of the threatenings and the promises of God: "Their knowledge is not sufficient, nor able to direct them in particulars and therefore doth leave them in the ende."[39] Perkins concurs:

> The reprobate generally in a confused manner beleeveth that Christ is a Saviour of some men: and he neither can nor desireth to come to the particular applying of Christ . . . The reprobate may be perswaded of the mercy and goodnes of God toward him *for the present time in the which he feeleth it;* the elect is not onley perswaded of the mercies he presently enjoyeth, but also he is persuaded of his eternal election before the foundation of the world.[40]

A "generall faith" was by definition a temporary one. The emphasis on understanding sin and remorse in very particular and personal terms called for an ongoing investigation in which new and more detailed discoveries about one's inner state were made over the course of time. In a sermon during Easter week of 1593, Thomas Playfere described the temporizer as "a mill-horse which making many steps, turnes about, and is continually found in the same place. Or as a dore which riding upon his hinges all the day long, is never a whit nearer at night."[41] An inability or unwillingness to move forward, in the godly's eyes, categorically negated any signs or expectations of salvation.

[35]*A Discourse of Conscience* (Cambridge: John Legatt, 1596), 112.
[36]*Certane Questions and Answeres*,[sig] K 4.
[37]*Countrie Divinitie*, 111.
[38]*Workes*, 88.
[39]*Workes*, 95.
[40]William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine: Or the Description of Theologie Containing the Order of the Causes of Salvation and Damnation* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1600), 572.
[41]Thomas Playfere, *The Pathway to Perfection* (London: Andrew Wise, 1597), 58.

Temporizers often were hard to recognize. The visible Church contained those individuals who, in the words of William Perkins, "though indeed he be a goate, yet he is taken for one of God's sheepe."[42] These seeming "sheepe" fooled not only others but themselves. In *A Golden Chaine*, Perkins explains that such men, "charitably reputed by the Church as true members," have fallen into such a web of self-deception that "they are no more true members then are the noxious humours in man's bodie, or a woodden legge or other joynt cunningly fastened to an other part of the bodie."[43] Again, the immutable truth could only be discovered in time. "And in this they are like haukes," explained Perkins, "which so long as they live are carried on the hands of noble men, but when they are dead, they are cast on the dunghill."[44]

Small wonder that those who were willing to persevere were set up over and against the temporizers. The very desire to perform this self-evaluation, in fact, stood as evidence that God had called that individual to salvation, for "it is a grace peculiar to the man elect to trie himselfe whether he be in the estate of grace or not."[45] Satan was all too ready to "traine men to presumption," said Greenham, and "would make man argue thus: 'I have a generall hope and faith, and therefore I doubt not but my faith is sound in every particular:' both of which are hurtfull."[46] The diarist and Essex preacher Richard Rogers claimed that God directed those he would save into sustained consideration of their sins, "as a matter of life and death." Rogers exhorted his readers, "I say give no rest to your selves until you can prove that you be in the state of salvation . . . You count no toile to sweate in hay and in harvest; this is another matter of substance."[47] Temporizers, damned before all eternity, proved themselves as such when they could not, or would not, persevere in an investigation as to whether or not they had been damned before all eternity.

III. "When the Spirite is Wounded"

Clearly, the godly were willing to improvise on the rhetoric of predestination if it meant rousing complacent Christians to a more strenuous and enduring mode of self-examination. But we should not dismiss these divines as concerned solely with doctrine, at the expense of those they wished to indoctrinate. The godly's pastoral impulse often gets lost in the attention to their "precisianist"

[42]*A Golden Chaine*, 580.
[43]*Workes*, 82–83.
[44]*A Golden Chaine*, 581.
[45]*A Treatise Tending* . . ., The Epistle Dedicatorie.
[46]Greenham, *Workes*, 15.
[47]Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises* (London: Thomas Man, 1603), 13, 69.

tendencies, but they did not indulge in "temporal improvisation" simply to frighten or intimidate.[48] If godly divines used temporary faith to keep some of their audience in a state of holy suspense, these same divines also offered up "temporary unbelief"—my term, not theirs—when healthy concern lapsed into unalleviated anguish.

The godly divines were the first to admit that unrelieved "soul scourging" did push some penitents into the pits of desolation.[49] Greenham described it thusly:

> When the spirite is wounded there is a guiltinesse of sinne. And where a man's spirite is troubled, hee suspecteth all his wayes, hee feareth all his sin, he knowes not what sin to begin with, it breeds such hurly burly in him that when it is day hee wisheth for night; when it is night, he would have it day.[50]

Perkins writes about those who say to themselves, "I would to God . . . I could perswade my selfe that these promises belonged to me. For my present estate constraineth me to doubt, whether I am the child of God, or not."[51] Perkins also offers advice to fledgling pastors if such a person, "much possessed with griefe of himself," comes under the pastor's care: "He must not be left alone," Perkins cautions, "but alwaies attended with good companie." Perkins also recommends, "the partie distressed, must never heare tell of any

[48]For an analysis of godly introspection as a tool for social control and self-regulation, see Bozeman's *The Precisianist Strain*, in which he highlights the godly's "zest for regulation" in their attempts to curb lingering social expressions from the pre-Reformation era, 5, 41–43. Michael Winship makes a more tempered claim, acknowledging the godly's interest in managing social behavior but allowing that "Puritan practical divinity was an assortment of not-entirely-consistent techniques, doctrinal emphases, and affects intended to meet not-entirely-consistent goals": 480.

[49]Perhaps the best known victim of unrelenting despair in this period was Francesco Spiera (known as "Francis Spira" in English descriptions). Spira died in 1548 in Cittadella, Italy, apparently convinced that he was damned to hell because God had not forgiven him for recanting his Protestant beliefs before the Inquisition some six months before he died. This story caught the imagination of English Protestants who used Spira's story to illustrate, among other things, the horrors of a reprobate death. Primary sources include Nathanial Bacon, *A Relation of the Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira in the Yeare 1548* (London: John Legat, 1638); and Nathaniel Wood's play *The Conflict of Conscience* (London: Richard Bradocke, 1581). For modern comment on Spira and his place in English Protestant discourse, see M. A. Overell, "Recantation and Retribution: 'Remembering Francis Spira,' 1548–1638" in *Retribution, Repentance, and Reconciliation: Papers Read at the 2002 Summer Meeting and the 2003 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, eds. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory, *Studies in Church History* 40 (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell, for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 2004), and M. A. Overall, "The Exploitation of Francesco Spiera" *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 26:3 (Fall 1995) 619–637. Also see Michael MacDonald, "The Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira: Narrative, Identity, and Emotion in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 31:1 (January 1992): 32–61.

[50]*Two Treatises*, 11.

[51]*A Golden Chaine*, 184.

fearefull accidents or of any that have been in like or worse case than himselfe."[52]

Judging by the plethora of literature dedicated to soothing those who suffered from an afflicted conscience, many penitents looked dutifully into the secret recesses of their soul and, after a sustained meditation on their sins and a careful cultivation of godly sorrow, concluded that their sins were too numerous and too great to ever be forgiven. According to the godly, those unfortunates could entertain every hope that their view would change if they just continued to search. Almost as frequently as the godly warned against complacency, they consoled those who looked into the deepest recesses of their souls and failed to find evidence of a saving faith. The godly referred to this state as "temporary despair," and pronounced it curable. The Lord had a "secret way with mercy," and what could feel like punishment or rejection was often simply "a preparative to the child of God to keepe him from sinne in time to come."[53]

"Temporary despair" could descend upon a person for a variety of reasons. For one thing, as the godly divines were quick to remind their audience, the devil reveled in plaguing the elect with doubts. For the godly, Satan was never very far away: "He visitith all places, and his inquisition be stricter than the Spanish (for that catches not but Protestants; the papists 'scape)."[54] Just as the devil might convince a reprobate that a generall faith was sufficient, he could also drive the elect to mistakenly conclude, "I have no faith in this or that particular."[55] Satan never could hope to make a final claim on an elect Christian, but he could—and often did—"trouble [the godly's] peace and dampe their spirits, and cut asunder all their endeavors."[56]

Of course, Satan ultimately came under God's dominion, and visitations from Satan could come only with God's permission.[57] Moreover, sometimes Satan did not even enter into the picture; God could burden the faithful with an unquiet heart all on his own. Charles Richardson pointed to St. Peter's great self-recrimination after denying Christ to argue that God can withhold comfort from his children: "God doth it sometimes to trie us. Not as if he were ignorant of us, for he knoweth what is in man. But that we may better knowe our selves." Or, the doubt and despondency that sometimes plagued

[52]William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience Distinguished into Three Bookes* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1606), 104.

[53]William Cowper, *A Conduit to Comfort* (London: W. White, 1606), 171, 174–175.

[54]Thomas Adams, *The Blacke Devil or the Apostate Together with the Wolfe Worrying the Lambes* (London: William Jaggard, 1615), 28.

[55]Greenham, *Workes*, 16.

[56]Richard Sibbs, *The Soule's Conflict With It Selfe, And Victory Over It Selfe by Faith* (London, 1615), 128.

[57]William Perkins, *Satan's Sophistrie Answered by Our Saviour Christ* (London: Richard Fields, 1604), 59 and passim.

the elect might serve to "chasten some secret sinne in us whereof wee have not yet repented."[58] The elect Christian needed to persevere against doubt, "to strive & contend even against all uncleanesse, and never to cease," and to remember that "the Lord doth know what is most meet and expedient for us and therefore will have men exercised under the crosse, some longer, and some for a shorter time." This suffering was to instruct humans in his ways, of course, but also so "that in all, Hee may principally be gloryfied."[59]

And how could the godly penitent know if his or her afflicted conscience was a blessing in disguise, or an indication of damnation? Again, time would tell. Richardson assures his readers that as soon as godly penitents identified their unrepented sins and "unfainedly humbled our selves for it under His hand, He returneth againe to our comfort."[60] In Greenham's sermon on Thessalonians 5:19, he depicts the elect individual's battles with doubt and unbelief as "purgatorie in this present lyfe."[61] But like purgatory, the battle is finite. If the doleful feelings came from God, they would not last, for God "doth but cast us downe to raise us up, and empty us that he may fill us."[62] In fact, the godly could look upon the disquiet as a gift, counseled Greenham, "For as a father withdraweth from his child sometimes his love, & whippeth him with the rod of correction, so the Lord dealeth often with his children & he scourgeth their naked conscience. God doth judge His here, but His enemies will be judged in the world to come."[63] Better unhappiness in the temporal world than damnation throughout eternity.

This lesson routinely was brought to bear in godly descriptions of deathbed scenes. Despite—or perhaps because of—godly grousing about unsatisfactory deathbed confessions, numerous published accounts of people's last days (many of them reprints of funeral sermons) offer a virtual template for how one might maintain resolve in the face of doubt. Satan consistently visited the deathbeds of the faithful, apparently hoping to at least disquiet their final hours if he could not seize their immortal souls. When Essex divine Samuel Smith preached the sermon at John Lawson's funeral, Smith explained that Christians on their deathbed often were "for the most part most grievously tempted by Sathan, whose policy is ever then to be most busie."[64] Stephen Denison's sermon in 1619 at the funeral of Elizabeth Juxon recounted how Juxon "observed the subtiltie of Satan … to hinder her in her present holy

[58]Charles Richardson, *The Repentance of Peter and Judas* (London: William Stansby, 1611), 33.
[59]*Countrie Divinitie*, 107. Robert Yarrow, *Soveraigne Comforts for a Troubled Conscience* (London: Ralph Rounthwaite, 1619), 277.
[60]Richardson, 33.
[61]*Workes*, 101.
[62]Sibbs, 128.
[63]*Workes*, 187.
[64]Samuel Smith, *A Christian Taske: A Sermon Preached at the Funerall of Maister John Lawson* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1620), 69.

business." Denison goes on to describe how his ears were "continually filled with her complaints in respect of hardnesse of heart, and with her mourning because she could not mourne as she ought."[65]

One particularly fierce deathbed confrontation with Satan involved Katherine Brettergh, a young woman of Lancashire. According to William Harrison, a clergyman who visited with her during her last days before she fell ill, she was a model of godly piety: she "walke[d] in the waies of Sion," and sought out only those who walked likewise.[66] Brought to bed with a "hot burning Ague in the spring of 1601," she spent much of her last days concentrated on the frailty of her faith and the great weight of her sins. Harrison recounts that shortly after she fell ill, she began to "descend into a hevie conflict with the infirmity of her owne spirit." She wept, and accused herself of having an insufficient faith. She repeatedly threw her Bible to the ground, claiming she read it "unprofitably." Attempting to pray, she stopped once in the middle of the Lord's prayer, unable to utter the words, "lead us not into temptation," she claimed, because Satan would not permit her. "So it seemed the sorrowes of death hemm'd her in, and the griefes of hell lay hold upon her," Harrison observed.[67]

Her travails of unbelief and self-accusation continued intermittently for the next six days, until Saturday morning when she was able to answer "Amen" as her husband prayed. When her husband moved on to Scripture reading, Katherine interrupted him to speak to Jesus, who now was apparently in her presence: "O Lord Jesu, dost thou pray for me? O blessed and sweet Saviour, how wonderfull!" From then on, her husband's Bible reading was peppered with Katherine's exclamations of joy and comfort in "the bright shining beames" of Christ's mercy, directed at her. Brettergh died the following day, "passing away in peace, without any motion of body at all."[68] Likewise, Denison reports that in the end Elizabeth Juxton assured him "the Lord had freed her from hellish feares, and that she found much peace."[69] While these accounts—and the many others like them—certainly are shaped by conventions of the genre, they nonetheless indicate that despair could

[65]Stephen Denison, *The Monument or Tombstone: or A Sermon Preached at Lawrence Pointes Church in London, November 21, 1619* (London: George Miller, 1631), 48. Denison (and his quarrels with John Etherington) is the subject of Peter Lake's *The Boxmaker's Revenge: "Orthodoxy", "Heterodoxy", and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001). See 18–19 for Lake's summary of Denison's sermon at Elizabeth Juxon's funeral.

[66]William Harrison, *The Christian Life and Death, of Mistris Katherin Brettergh Late Wife of Master William Brettergh, of Bretterghoult, in the Countie of Lancaster* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1634), 6.

[67]sig B 2.

[68]sig C 3.

[69]Denison, *The Monument or Tombstone*, 50–51.

visit even the most pious, and moreover that Satan's dominion was indeed temporal; the elect would ultimately reside in heavenly peace.[70]

IV. "Sure and Sweet Signes"

At first glance, the godly's advice to those who felt the pangs of damnation—endure patiently, do not cease soul-searching—might seem of a piece with these divines' rather stern directives to temporizers overly confident of their election. However, the rhetoric of temporary disbelief contains evidence of pastoral concern, not just for their flocks' immortal souls, but for their peace of mind on this earth as well. Several different clergymen attended Katherine Brettergh, and all sought to convince her that her doubt in her election was ill-founded; Harrison recounts the efforts of his colleague Edward Aspinwall as he "propounded to her the most plentiful comforts of God." Aspinwall repeatedly referenced biblical figures (including Christ on the cross) that had felt deserted by God, and assured her that her "detestation of sinne and imitation of her Saviour in a holy life" stood as irrefutable proof of her saving faith and eternal salvation. Her present agony, declared Aspinwall, was no indication that "she, or any that heard her should judge fearefully of her." He insisted that "the fault was not in her will . . . but in her judgement"; she simply was not reading the signs properly, and she would come in time to understand the true nature of her estate.[71]

Perkins no doubt would have approved such ministering; when he describes those who have fallen prey to an afflicted conscience, he also reminds the would-be pastors that the clergyman is there in the role of comforter, that empathy is tantamount: "He must put upon him (as it were) their persons, beeing affected with their miserie, and touched with compassion of their sorrowes, as if they were his owne, greiving when he seeth them to greive, weeping when they doe weepe and lament."[72] In other texts, Perkins offers

[70]While we never can know Brettergh's state of mind, of course, we can be relatively certain that she did give voice to religious doubt during her last days. The occasion of her death prompted a pamphlet exchange in Lancashire between Protestants and the vocal Roman Catholic minority, in which the Catholics pointed to Brettergh's struggles to argue that the Protestant religion offered no comfort in one's final hours (the pamphlets have been lost). Even at her funeral, the preachers were at pains to refute that notion, and reprints of Harrison's account—which emphasized a diabolical onslaught successfully defended—continued into the 1630s. The sermons were originally published in *Death's Advantage Little Regarded, and The Soule's Solace Against Sorrow Preached in Two Funerall Sermons at Childwal in Lancashire at the Buriall of Mistris Katherin Brettergh the Third of June*, 1601 (London: Felix Kingston, 1602). See also Steve Hindle, "Brettergh, Katherine (1579–1601)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/view/article/3351.

[71]Harrison,[sig] B3.

[72]*Cases of Conscience*, 105.

comfort directly to those who have ceased in the ability to pray in the right way: "When beeing in distresse, we cannot pray as we ought; God accepts the very groanes, sobs and sighs of the perplexed heart, as the praier it selfe."[73] And what of those who cannot produce tears? Perkins readily admits that not everyone has "a constitution of body that they have teares at their command." Therefore, he assures his readers, "a godly man with drie cheekes may mourne to God for his sins."[74]

Perkins also encourages such people to look for other marks of a saving faith. In a dialogue penned by Perkins designed to lay out the signs of "whether a man be in the estate of damnation or in the state of grace," the godly Eusebius lists those signs that point to God's favor: "He hath made me in his owne image, having a reasonable soule, bodie, shape, where he might have made me a Toade, a Serpent, a swine, deformed, franticke." Eusebius continues, taking comfort and evidence of God's grace that he has made it to adulthood, and notes that while "I might have beene borne of Turkes; loe it was the will of God that I should be borne of Christian parents."[75] For all of Perkins's talk of particularity and specificity, when it comes to someone "in distresse" over his or her election, a wordless, tearless unhappiness becomes an acceptable sacrifice before God. And while the temporizer might be deemed as such for residing in generalities, those struggling with despair could count being human (and English) as strong proof of a faith they could not feel but nonetheless possessed.

Richard Greenham's advice to those troubled in conscience also indicates that he was willing to make allowances for those truly afflicted. When he composed a list of things in which those worried about their salvation might take comfort, he pointed to "an expecting of the daily increase of our soule's health and our bodies' resurrection," as well as "a desire that after death the Church of God may flourish and have all peace" as "sure and sweet signes" of election. The short rules Greenham sent to a "gentlewoman troubled in minde" reminded her that "it is a great mercy of God to discerne a temptation in time of temptation." In other words, the faintest nod to Christian precepts (the body's resurrection) and the slightest regard for the church (one simply needed not to wish it harm) could assure the Christian of salvation. Moreover, the very doubts concerning election experienced by the gentlewoman pointed to her probable election.[76]

[73]"Mustard Seed" in *Workes*, 780.
[74]*Two Treatises*, 63.
[75]*Treatise Tending Unto A Declaration*, 138.
[76]Richard Greenham, *A Most Sweete and Assured Comfort for All Those That Are Afflicted in Consciscience* [*sic*] (London: John Danter, 1595). *Short Rules Sent by Maister Richard Greenham to a Gentlewoman Troubled in Mind* (London: T Snodham, 1612). For a perceptive analysis of the tension between doubt and faith, see David Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 120–123.

Greenham also corresponded with a certain "Master M.," an erstwhile Cambridge student, who had lately returned to his father's home. M. apparently had fallen into a "hardnes of heart" that he could not dissolve "either with the promises of God's mercies or feare of his judgment, nor affected with the love and delight of the thing which bee good, nor with the hatred and loathing of the evill." Greenham expresses concern and admits, "I myselfe have knowen other as deepely this way plunged as you can be." Nonetheless, Greenham never doubts that his friend's immobility is temporary, and that M.'s perception of his own reprobation is inaccurate: "I am perswaded that your perswation is somewhat false."[77] God's children could indeed be "blinded in minde, and hardened in heart for a time," acknowledged Greenham, but the very fact that M. perceived his hardness of heart indicated that God's spirit was within him. Greenham reminded M. that even though King David had confessed his sin and received pardon from God, "he never felt joy thereof nor true griefe for the other." "This is your case, and therefore you are in the state of salvation; for David was in this case."[78] Master M.'s sense of desolation was not permanent, any more so than the supposed assurance of the temporizers.

V. Conclusion: "To Be Apples"

The godly found ways to make wide the gate for those with afflicted consciences. While the temporizer was castigated for a complacent approach to soul-searching, the Christian in the throes of doubt need only to "greatly mislike this thy doubting" to gain confidence of election.[79] The very existence of doubt could be taken as assurance, for "what greater evidence that we are conceived of Christ than when we feele him sensibley struggling in us against the old Adam?"[80] Alexander Hume pronounced a remorseful conscience "gude, and is proper to the children of God." Hume hastened to add that "in the children of God it is temporall onely, and is cured and taken away with blenks of hevenly comforte."[81]

With the implication of temporality, the godly offered comfort as well as rebuke. Some must wait to know saving faith, but delay does not mean exclusion. "As Laban kept Jacob a long while from his youngest daughter," Thomas Playfere preached in the Cathedral Church in Exeter, "So God often

[77]Greenham, *Two Treatises*, 90.
[78]Ibid., 92, 94.
[79]Thomas Sparke, *A Short Treatise* (London: Ralph Newberry, 1580),[sig] B6.
[80]Denison, *The Monument or Tombstone*, 48.
[81]Alexander Hume, *Ane Treatise of Conscience Quhairin Divers Secreits Concerning That Subject* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1594), 23, 32.

times holdeth us a while in suspense that he may more sharpen our appetite and inflame our desire."[82] William Cowper called election "the first spring that flowes from the bottomlesse fountaine of God's love," but added that "for a long time it runnes so secret that we cannot see it." And for those who had possessed the spirit but subsequently experienced "a spiritual desertion," Joseph Alliston offers the reminder that "the thicke and duskie bodie of the moone" may for a time eclipse the sun but can never entirely obliterate the life-sustaining light.[83] To be sure, the godly exhorted their audience to continued soul-searching but were also quick to assure them that any disquiet over what they found in no way indicated their exclusion from God's elect. Moreover, for those in real anguish, these reformers were willing to widen the gate significantly.

At one level, the godly's commitment to God's total sovereignty could allow neither time nor human effort as an agent of change. God had mandated all before all time; to admit otherwise lessened God's power. Yet the godly divines' "practical piety" clearly builds on a linear time frame. The penitent's soul was anything but static; in fact, the human heart's intrinsic mutability made necessary the constant exploration of "the secret lodgings of the heart and soule."[84] The godly Christian was subject to significant fluctuations, and even ostensible reverses, as she or he both participated in and monitored an introspective penitential process that included the very real possibility of deconversion over time, and also offered the likelihood of reprieve to those who felt outside the fold.

The godly penitent who did not feel the spirit within him or her had every reason to think that, with continued "striving, asking, seeking, knocking," the spirit would reveal itself within his or her heart.[85] William Burton, citing the parable of the sower, claims that "the fruites of the spirite in the elect children of God are likewise like the fruit of the tree, which is first in sap only, then it commeth into bud, and then into blossomes." This process was by no means free from peril: "Some are smitten with blasting, some are nipped with frost & cold, & some are eaten with worms." Indeed, some will succumb to these hardships, but, as Burton assures his readers, many will prevail and "come to be apples."[86]

In the dedicatory epistle to *A Countrie Divinitie*, George Gifford identified the audience at which his efforts were aimed: "There are the most in number, who having Poperie taken from them and not taught thoroughly and sufficiently in the Gospell, doe stand as men indifferent."[87] For the godly to

[82]Thomas Playfere, *Hearts Delight* (London: John Leggatt, 1617), 3.
[83]Alliston, *The Exercise of True Spirituall Devotion*, 122.
[84]Ibid., 116. The term "practical piety" originated with Lewis Wright, "The Practical Piety of William Perkins," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 3:2 (1940): 171–196.
[85]"Mustard Seed" in *Workes*, 781.
[86]Burton, *Conclusions*,[sig] B 3.
[87][sig] Aiii.

win the hearts and minds of the laity, they needed to eradicate indifference. They needed to provide their audience a new approach to understanding and experiencing their own hearts and minds, an approach that put new emphasis on the individual's inner life. No one can claim, of course, that a Christian self founded on heartfelt contrition and born of prolonged introspection was a godly innovation, but the godly unquestionably added a new wrinkle. They never emphasized an emptying of self, or urged a union between human and God, as many of their late-medieval predecessors did. The godly engaged in self-analysis to sharpen individual boundaries, not to blur them. The godly decried what they saw as the regimen of both Roman Catholics and "drowsie Protestants." A "reverent assent" to a few "necessarie points of religion" did not an elect Christian make.[88] The godly demanded individuals who engaged in enduring and unblinking self-scrutiny, who understood salvation as a personalized and particularized blessing from a God who did not bless indiscriminately.

Critics knew them as "puritans," "the precise," and by a host of other epithets indicating an unyielding, stiff-necked approach to God and religion. And to be sure, the godly advocated an arduous, perhaps even stultifying religious regimen, grounded in a theology that their detractors found complicated and comfortless. But the phenomena of "temporary faith" and "temporary unbelief" allow us to view the godly evangelicals through a different lens. The godly injected a note of temporality into a structure that allowed no temporal element, pushing some to a more thorough acquaintance with sin and divine judgment, but also guiding others toward solace and comfort in divine mercy. Had they done only the former, we could join their detractors in decrying their rigidity; had they done only the latter we might conclude that the notion of predestination simply became too tough a sell, and that the godly found ways to lower the bar. But their rhetoric on how faith operates within a temporal framework requires that we take seriously their pastoral concerns. It was a commonplace that while election had occurred beyond the boundaries of time, the Christian worked within those boundaries to discern that decree. The godly devised a system, remarkable in its flexibility, to help the Christian alleviate anxiety and endure in the discernment process. God had bestowed the gift of faith on the elect before the formation of the world, but—as the godly constructed things—not only was the apprehension of the gift subject to the confines of time, the gift itself was temporal. The godly's rhetoric concerning temporary faith underpinned a system by which the godly individual could construct an interiorized, individualized, and mutable self capable of apprehending God's blessing. And within such a system, indifference was indeed intolerable, but it need not be permanent.

[88]Perkins, *Reformed Catholike*, 275.