Persecutors, Tempters and Vassals of the Devil: The Unregenerate in Puritan Practical Divinity

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During the late Tudor and early Stuart age, England's parish ministries were increasingly occupied by energetic Puritan preachers who sought to convert souls and build 'godly' communities. Together with 'godly' magistrates and lay supporters, these preachers laboured to replace a culture rooted in traditional festivals, ales, dances and games with a culture sustained by frequent sermons, Scripture-reading and a strict observance of the Sabbath. Not everyone, however, heeded the call of the preachers.[1] Many people, in most places probably a significant majority, were unable or unwilling to embrace the Puritan theology of grace and were opposed to Puritans' interference in their lives. Resistance to Puritans surfaced in different forms and degrees, ranging from indifference and passivity to organised demonstrations and protests, to street fighting and violence. Verbal abuse seems to have been common; the preferred term of abuse, 'Puritan', remained a potent and wounding accusation in spite of its common currency.[2] From about the 1570s and

[1] For a consideration of the evidence and historical interpretations concerning the relative numbers of Puritans and non-Puritans see Margaret Spufford, 'Can we count the "godly" and the "conformable" in the seventeenth century?', this JOURNAL xxxvi (1985), 428–38.

[2] 'Puritan' was a term of abuse generally used in two overlapping contexts, both defined by conflict. In the first, the controversies about church government, liturgy and discipline, the term 'Puritan' denoted an individual whose position on church government and liturgy was overly 'precise' and tended toward schism. In the other, the tensions created by godly activists seeking to reform local communities, 'Puritan' suggested a proud, hypocritical self-styled saint whose vision of a Christian life was overly 'precise' and who was 'busy' in the affairs of others. Because the term was a pejorative one and notoriously difficult to define, both then and now, some historians have suggested

80s, when Puritan evangelism emerged as a significant movement in England, to the period of the Civil War, tensions between Puritans and anti-Puritans periodically surfaced in towns and villages across the kingdom, with divisions in communities cutting across class lines.[3]

In sermons and treatises of practical divinity, Puritan preachers frequently judged, admonished, counselled and exhorted parishioners who resisted reform. In doing so they typically invoked two different kinds of images to describe anti-Puritans. One was a picture of ignorant but well-meaning villagers who protested against Puritan meddling in their lives, defended traditional forms of 'recreation' and 'good neighbour-hood', and professed a simple form of Christianity founded on good works and good intentions. The other was a picture of anti-Puritans as dangerous enemies of the gospel, as 'atheists' and 'carnal worldlings'

abandoning it. Most, however, recognise the value of preserving a contemporary term that captures the tensions of the historical period, in spite of the problem of defining the term and determining who exactly is a Puritan. For discussion of the term and further references see Patrick Collinson, 'A comment: concerning the name Puritan', this JOURNAL xxxi (1980), 483–8, and *The Puritan character: polemics and polarities in early seventeenth-century English culture*, Los Angeles 1989.

[3] On the issue of Puritans and social class see Margaret Spufford, 'Puritanism and social control?', in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds), *Order and disorder in early modern England*, Cambridge 1985, 41–57, and Eamon Duffy, 'The godly and the multitude in Stuart England', *Seventeenth Century* i (1986), 31–55. The literature on Puritan evangelism and on Tudor and Stuart popular culture has become vast in recent decades. The starting point for the subject of Puritans and the progress of the Reformation in England is the work of Patrick Collinson. See especially *The birthpangs of Protestant England: religion and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, New York 1988; 'The Elizabethan Church and the new religion', in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The reign of Elizabeth I*, London 1984, 169–94; and *The religion of the Protestants: the Church in English society 1559–1625*, Oxford 1982. Christopher Haigh has been one of the pioneers in developing the 'slow' Reformation model of the English Reformation, drawing attention to the resistance that Protestant ideas met throughout the sixteenth century. See especially his *English Reformations: religion, politics, and society under the Tudors*, Oxford 1993; 'The Church of England, the Catholics and the people', in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *Reign of Elizabeth*, Athens, Ga. 1987, 195–219; and 'The recent historiography of the English Reformation', in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation revisited*, Cambridge 1987, 19–33. Keith Thomas's *Religion and the decline of magic*, London 1971, remains the most comprehensive survey of the impact of the Reformation on popular belief. For Puritans and popular culture see Jeremy Goring, *Godly exercises or the devil's dance?: Puritanism and popular culture in pre-civil war England*, London 1983, and Ronald Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England: the ritual year 1400–1700*, Oxford 1994. Much of our understanding of Puritans and English society has emerged from local area studies. See, for example, David Underdown, *Revel, riot and rebellion: popular politics and culture in England 1603–1660*, Oxford 1986, and *Fire from heaven: life in an English town in the seventeenth century*, New Haven 1992; William Hunt, *The Puritan moment: the coming of revolution in an English county*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983; Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and piety in an English village: Terling, 1525–1700*, New York 1979. There are numerous studies on particular subjects related to Puritans and popular culture, including the Sabbath, popular recreation and the alehouse, references to which can be found in these works.

who 'persecuted' the godly. In each case the people being described were the same. Indeed, Puritan preachers brought together both sets of images of the unreformed all in the same breath, moving without pause from images of uncomprehending and seemingly innocuous defenders of traditional culture to images of agents of the devil labouring to destroy Christian souls and snuff out all godliness.

Historians have used some of these literary images, notably the ones describing the values and beliefs of the unreformed, primarily for the purpose of understanding popular religious beliefs and the cultural conflict that divided English communities.[4] Historians have not, however, fully understood the images from the perspective of the authors, the Puritan preachers themselves. The hostile images of the unregenerate in particular, appearing on the surface to be nothing more than name-calling or inflated rhetoric, have received little systematic treatment. Words like 'atheist' and 'ungodly' were indeed incendiary terms; Puritans used them to denounce anti-Puritans in much the same way that the latter hurled the epithet 'Puritan' against the self-styled 'godly' elect. But in sermons and treatises of practical divinity, Puritan preachers were not simply name-calling. They were giving expression to a theologically precise picture of the spiritual condition of the unreformed, a picture derived from their understanding of the Epistles of Paul as well as from their social experience with parishioners.[5] By juxtaposing the benign and dangerous, the commonplace and cosmic, Puritan preachers sought to demonstrate to audiences that the behaviour and opinions of the unreformed were manifestations of an underlying unregenerate spiritual condition, that even seemingly decent people – neighbours and fellow churchgoers – were in reality 'natural men' who rejected God, the Gospel and the godly and who were in bondage to 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'.[6] By teaching audiences about the true nature of the unreformed,

[4] Historians have assumed that, in spite of the conventions of exaggeration governing sermons and the 'literature of complaint', Puritan authors, when reconstructing the position of anti-Puritans, provide some insight into the beliefs and values of the common people. See, for example, Haigh, *English Reformations*, 281–4; Hunt, *Puritan moment*, 151–2; Keith Wrightson, *English society, 1580–1680*, New Brunswick, NJ 1982, 204–5. Preachers, of course, had reason to render a reasonably accurate picture of the views of the unreformed so that audiences could make connections between their sermon teachings and daily parish life.

[5] On the importance of Paul to Puritanism see John S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England: Puritanism and the Bible*, Oxford 1970.

[6] John Downame, *The Christian warfare*, London 1634 (*RSTC* 7137), 6. Downame's recitation of the three 'spiritual enemies' of Christians echoes the language of the liturgy of the baptism, a sacrament that, according to Downame, must be construed as a 'military sacrament' by which Christians promise to be God's 'faithfull souldiers unto the end'. Cf. *The booke of common praier*, London 1559 (*RSTC* 16292), N6v: 'Graunt that they maye have power and strength to have victorye, and to triumphe agaynst the devyll, the worlde and the flesh.' Capitalisation in all quotes has been normalised.

Puritan preachers hoped to awaken and convert worldlings, prevent the relapse of weak Christians, and exhort all Christians to lead godly and 'precise' lives.

I

The vast bulk of Puritan sermons and treatises were works of 'practical divinity', didactic and exhortative works intended to be of immediate and practical use to Christian audiences seeking spiritual guidance.[7] Puritan preachers believed that their principal responsibility as ministers of God was to convert people and aid them in their spiritual development. Because England's parish churches were composed of a 'mixt people', saints and sinners alike, Puritan divines knew that their sermons had to be directed to people of widely different 'spiritual conditions', ranging from 'unbeleevers, who are both ignorant, and unteachable', to conscientious and zealous Christians.[8] Although their reading audience was more self-selective, Puritan preachers generally composed books and published sermons for broad audiences as well, directing messages not only to the faithful but also to weak or wavering Christians, to potential converts, and sometimes even to 'hardened' sinners.

Puritan preachers believed that everyone, not least the unreformed themselves, stood to profit from a proper understanding of what it meant to be unregenerate. The topic bulked large in Puritan practical divinity, appearing in a wide variety of genres and contexts, from sermons of all types, to catechisms, to self-help and devotional works, to treatises of biblical exegesis and commentary. Perhaps the most sustained discussions of the condition of the unregenerate appeared in treatises devoted to the subjects of original sin, 'natural man' and human nature.[9] Un-questionably the most lively and colourful of the literary genres dealing extensively with the unreformed was the dialogue, the most notable being George Gifford's well-known treatise *Countrie divinitie*, which featured a debate between a Puritan and an anti-Puritan character and which

[7] Although historians have mined Puritan practical divinity for various purposes and have devoted considerable attention to particular themes, from the Puritan conversion experience to the operation of God's grace and spirit, there has been no comprehensive study of Puritan sermons and treatises of practical divinity. Although much criticised, William Haller's *Rise of Puritanism*, New York 1938, still provides a useful overview of some of the most important themes and images in Puritan practical divinity. Perhaps the most insightful treatment of Puritan practical divinity to date is Peter Lake's *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, Cambridge 1982, ch. vii.

[8] William Perkins, *Workes*, Cambridge 1616–18 (*RSTC* 19651), ii. 665–8.

[9] For example, John Prime, *A fruitfull and briefe discourse in two bookes : the one of nature and the other of grace*, London 1583 (*RSTC* 20370); Perkins, 'A treatise of mans imagination', in *Workes*, iii. 456–85; Henry Holland, *The history of Adam, or the foure-folde state of man*, London 1606 (*RSTC* 13587).

served as a model for subsequent dialogues.[10] Short discussions of the unregenerate were ubiquitous in Puritan sermons and treatises. Perhaps the most common way Puritan authors dealt with the subject of the unregenerate was in the form of typologies, those sprawling, overlapping, and intricate taxonomies identifying various species of worldlings and infidels, sins and spiritual diseases.

In spite of the diversity of genres treating the unreformed, in spite of the endless variations in labelling and categorisation, and in spite of differences in emphases, Puritan characterisations of the unreformed throughout the late Tudor and early Stuart era were remarkably similar in their main features. Indeed, Puritan authors constructed an anti-Puritan stereotype, often using identical language to describe the unregenerate, a pattern that may be attributed in part to their use of the same biblical vocabulary and paradigms, in part to their similar social experiences, and in part to their tendency to borrow from each other's work.[11] The stereotype embraced both the seemingly innocuous and the sinister images of anti-Puritans; both were central to the pedagogical aims and rhetorical strategies of Puritan practical divinity. Puritan preachers sought to teach audiences by reconstructing the self-professed beliefs of anti-Puritans, exposing those beliefs as self-deceptions, and revealing the bondage of the unreformed to 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'.

In their descriptions of the views of the average villager, Puritan preachers acknowledged that the unreformed embraced an internally consistent set of beliefs and attitudes about community and religion, beliefs and attitudes that they had inherited from the past. According to Puritan authors, anti-Puritans asserted that 'recreation' and 'good fellowship' were vital to the maintenance of 'good neighbourhood' and that 'busy' Puritan reformers undermined communal harmony. Gifford's anti-Puritan character, 'Atheos', for example, contrasted his parish

[10] George Gifford, *A briefe discourse of certaine points of the religion which is among the common sort of Christians, which may be termed countrie divinitie*, London 1581 (*RSTC* 11845); John Bate, *The portraiture of hypocrisie*, London 1589 (*RSTC* 1579); Arthur Dent, *The plaine mans path-way to heaven*, London 1601 (*RSTC* 6626); Thomas Turvell, *The poore mans path-way to heaven*, London 1616 (*RSTC* 24371). On George Gifford see Dewey Wallace, Jr, 'George Gifford, Puritan propaganda and popular religion in Elizabethan England', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* ix (1978), 27–49.

[11] George Gifford's *Countrie divinitie* was clearly of singular significance in the forging of the popular anti-Puritan stereotype. Also significant were the works of William Perkins, whose descriptions of the unregenerate were repeated verbatim by other preachers. As Michael Hunter has argued in the context of anti-atheist polemics, the fact that early modern stereotypes were so often derivative and expressed in ways that strike the modern observer as artificial, and, in the case of the anti-Puritan stereotype, quaint, should not lead us to imagine that authors were not describing real or perceived social phenomena or that they were not articulating real anxieties and concerns: 'The problem of "atheism" in early modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th ser. xxxv (1985), 135–57, esp. pp. 144–8.

minister, 'a very good fellow', with Puritan preachers, for whom he 'would not' give 'fortie shillings'. Atheos's parson was a 'gentle' man who 'doth feede the poore' and who 'wil not sticke when good fellowes and honest men meete together, to spend his groate at the alehouse'. He was 'none of these busie controllers' who 'mislike good fellowshipe'. When neighbours 'doe not agree, hee will seeke for to make them friendes: for hee will get them to play a game or two at bowles or cardes, and to drinke together at the alehouse', a practice Atheos deemed a 'godly way to make charitie'. To defend himself against 'busy' Puritans, Atheos invoked the authority of his 'forefathers', 'wise men' who 'would not have used or allowed such' popular forms of 'recreation' 'if they had not bene good'. 'Now', in the days of Puritan ascendancy, 'there is no love' or 'good neighbourhood'; 'then they lived in friendship, and made merrie together'.[12] Similarly in John Bate's dialogue, the anti-Puritan character, a gentleman, condemned 'sawcie' Puritans who seek to 'cheke and controule their superiors', contending that 'it is a piteous case to see howe those townes which have had honest simple men, and quiet soules that would not meddle with other mens matters are now troubled and molested by a company of sawcie fellowes who can abide no good friendship, no sportes, no pastime, no not so much as upon the Sunday'.[13]

Puritan authors depicted the religion of anti-Puritans as a simple, undemanding form of Christianity. According to the Devon preacher Samuel Hieron, the 'common Religion' of the 'common Protestant' was this: 'Hee hath a certaine notice of loving God above all, and his neighbour as himself, and that he thinketh is as much as hee needeth to care for'. Moreover, 'he thinketh himselfe of so good a Religion, to have such good a faith to God-ward, and to be so well-minded, that hee hath no need of instruction'. While he accepts that it is important to 'keepe' his 'Church, as well as the most', as 'becommeth a good subject', he is no 'meddler with the Scriptures' and believes 'it were a greate deale better, if there were lesse preaching' because 'it filleth mens heads full of matters' and 'breedeth divisions among neighbours'.[14] According to William Perkins, who isolated thirty-two 'common opinions' among 'ignorant people', the unreformed assumed they 'know all the Preacher can tell you' for 'he can say nothing, but that every man is a sinner, that we must love our neighbours as our selves', and 'that every man must be saved by Christ'. Such people assumed that 'faith' was nothing more than 'a mans good meaning, and his good serving of God', the latter consisting of 'rehearsing of the ten commandements, the Lords Prayer, and the Creede'. Similarly, they assumed that one were 'a right honest man' if one were 'no adulterer, no thiefe, no murtherer, and doe no man harme'

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[12] Gifford *Countrie divinitie*, 2–8.   [13] Bate, *Portraiture*, 8, 13.
[14] Samuel Hieron, *The sermons*, London 1635 (*RSTC* 13384), 45–6.

and that it was sufficient to 'keepe the commandments, as well as God will give you leave'.[15]

While professing a simple, mechanistic form of Christianity, the figure of the anti-Puritan dismissed the preachers' message of predestination, human corruption and redemption through God's grace and spirit. In the dialogue literature, the anti-Puritan characters criticised the Puritan theology of grace and expressed outrage at the implications of Puritan assertions. The 'one thing' that 'doth most of all sticke' in the 'stomacke' of Antilegon, Arthur Dent's anti-Puritan character, was the Puritan presumption that only a 'small number' will be saved and that 'God made so many thousands to cast them away when he hath done'. 'What reason, justice, or equitie is there', he asked, 'that sentence of death should be passed upon men before they be borne, and before they have done good or evil?' He could not understand why God would be so 'angrie with us'. Instead, Antilegon asserted that 'Gods mercy is above all his works', that 'God did not make us' simply 'to condemne us', and that God would forgive the sins of imperfect humans.[16]

Puritan preachers acknowledged that such opinions could in part be attributed to the fact that people like Atheos and Antilegon had not been 'taught thoroughly and sufficiently in the Gospell'.[17] They knew that anti-Puritans had simply absorbed the habits and customs of a popular culture born during the reign of AntiChrist and strongly resistant to change. But while the ungodly ways of anti-Puritans could be attributed to various secondary causes – to various historical, social and psychological circumstances – Puritan divines insisted that the principal or underlying explanation for the condition of anti-Puritans was 'spiritual'. The behaviour and beliefs of anti-Puritans were manifestations of their unregenerate spiritual condition, a condition for which they were completely responsible. All unregenerate people – all 'natural men' – were in complete bondage to humanity's 'spiritual' enemies, 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'. As servants of the devil, denizens of the 'world', and creatures of the 'flesh', the unreformed were dangerous enemies of the Gospel and subjects of the kingdom of darkness. The battle between Puritans and anti-Puritans was not simply a social and cultural conflict. It was not simply the product of competing ideas about community and religion. It was, above all, a holy war, a frontline battle in the 'Christian warfare' against 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'. The unregenerate were accomplices in a vast and intricate conspiracy of cosmic evil to destroy souls, a conspiracy orchestrated by the 'murderer' of souls 'from the beginning', the devil.

Puritan divines drew a distinction between the devil's capacity to inflict physical harm on victims and his ability to bring souls to destruction in

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[15] Perkins, *Workes*, i, sig. A2v.   [16] Dent, *Plaine mans path-way*, 277–80, 26.
[17] Gifford, *Countrie divinitie*, epistle dedicatory.

his role as spiritual 'tempter', placing far more emphasis on the latter than the former.[18] As a 'tempter', the devil's cunning was unfathomable to humans. Puritan preachers warned that the devil would 'daily invent new upon new' temptations to seduce souls, 'ever shifting from one to another', thus making it 'an infinite taske, a matter of impossibilitie to discerne all' of the devil's 'cunning strategems and subtle devices'.[19] However difficult it was to predict the devil's specific strategies, his general objectives were clear. Puritans assumed that it was 'Sathans continuall practise' 'ever to intise' Christians 'to the one extremitie, or the other', either to 'carnal security' and 'presumption', a spiritual condition marked by worldliness and an unfounded confidence in one's salvation, or to 'despair', the loss of hope in salvation.[20] To defend themselves, Christians were to strive for the 'golden mean' between security and despair, a state of vigilance wherein the 'Christian warrior' resisted the temptations of the devil by relying upon God's Word and the God-given 'spiritual armour' and 'weapons' of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, hope, the spirit and prayer.[21]

Puritan preachers argued that the devil typically assaulted souls in conjunction with his two 'aides', the 'world' and the 'flesh', each a dangerous source of temptation in its own right. The 'world' referred to the threat of both worldly people, the unregenerate, and 'worldly things, which Satan and wicked men use as meanes to draw men from the service of God' and 'to the service of sinne', including 'alluring baits' such as

[18] Isaac Colfe, *A comfortable treatise concerning the temptations of Christ*, London 1592 (*RSTC* 5551), sig. O3v. Historians of early modern Europe have tended to neglect this dimension of the perceived threat of Satan, especially in comparison to the enormous amount of work devoted to other phenomena related to the devil such as demonology, witchcraft and AntiChrist. Two genres in the Puritan literature were especially prominent in analysing the treatment of the devil as spiritual tempter, one taking its point of departure from Satan's temptation of Christ recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke, the other, the 'Christian warfare' genre, based on the exhortation to put on 'the whole armour of God' in Eph. vi.11–17.

[19] William Gouge, Πανοπλια τον Θεον: *the whole-armour of God*, London 1616 (*RSTC* 12122), 45.

[20] John Udall, *The combate betwixt Christ and the devill*, London 1588 (*RSTC* 24492), sigs F2r–v.

[21] Paul Baynes, *The spirituall armour*, London 1620 (*RSTC* 1647), 127–313. Here Puritan divines drew upon the imagery in Ephesians linking spiritual virtues and qualities to pieces of armour and weapons such as the 'breastplate of faith' and the 'sword of the spirit'. See, for example, Joseph Bentham, *The Christian conflict*, London 1635 (*RSTC* 1887), 65–135. Puritans contrasted the 'spiritual armour' and 'weapons' with the use of 'carnal' reason alone and with the 'carnal weapons' of the papists, such as crucifixes and holy water. On the inability of natural reason to resist Satan, even in the regenerate, see, for example, Richard Greenham, *Workes*, London 1612 (*RSTC* 12318), 309. For popish 'carnal weapons' see William Jemmatt, *A spirituall trumpet, exciting and preparing to the Christian warfare*, London 1624 (*RSTC* 14485), 16–17, and Thomas Broad, *A Christians warre*, London 1613 (*RSTC* 3805), 28–9.

'pleasures, profits, and preferments' and 'discouragments' such as 'troubles, afflictions, and persecutions'.[22] The 'flesh' was the 'corruption of nature' inherited from Adam 'whereby wee are made backward unto all good, and prone unto all evill'. Infecting not only the body but every faculty of the soul, including the higher faculties, the 'flesh' functioned as a womb to sin. It contained the 'seeds' of every 'sinne whatsoever though never so monstrous and abhominable', and it actively nourished those seeds; 'it first conceiveth, and then bringeth forth sinne'. The 'flesh' offered its own temptations to people, but it also served as a 'secret traitour', being 'most readie to receive and imbrace all the suggestions and temptations of the World and the Devill'.[23] The souls of the unregenerate were wholly of the 'flesh', but in the regenerate, there was a 'combate' in every faculty of the soul between the 'flesh' and the 'spirit', a created quality of holinesse', 'wrought' by 'the Holy Ghost'.[24]

For Puritan preachers, the imagery of warfare was not simply meant to be metaphorical; it was also intended to describe the spiritual condition of regenerate Christians – those who had been 'effectually called' and had received God's saving grace and spirit. As the Suffolk preacher Thomas Carew explained, Paul's exhortation to 'put on the whole armour of God' was 'not shewing what every Christian must do, but what every man doth if he be a Christian'.[25] 'Warfare' with 'the flesh, the world, and the devill' was thought to be an inevitable consequence of regeneration, an integral part of the sanctification process, and a sign of election. As the Bedford minister Thomas Adams put it, 'regeneration and contention salute us at once. No sooner is the new man formed in us, but suddenly beginnes this quarrel', and we find ourselves in a 'militant

[22] Downame, *Warfare*, 359. The term 'world' was often used simply to designate unregenerate people, though such a usage carried broad connotations since 'worldly things' and 'worldly' culture were closely associated with 'worldly' people. For a comprehensive list of Puritan definitions of the 'world', rooted in their understanding of the Bible, see Thomas Wilson, *Christian directorie*, London 1612 (*RSTC* 25786), *s.v.* 'world'.

[23] Downame, *Warfare*, 16, 1041.

[24] Perkins, *Workes*, i. 469–70. On the various definitions of 'flesh' and 'spirit' see Wilson, *Directorie*, *s.v.* 'flesh' and 'spirit'. While the vast majority of Puritans used 'flesh' and 'spirit' to describe 'natural corruption' and the 'created quality of holiness', some used other words, such as 'nature' and 'grace', to describe the same qualities. For Puritans, the confusion of the 'flesh' and 'spirit' with faculties such as the affections and reason was not only a misrepresentation of the operation of the human soul. It also underestimated the extent of human corruption, risked blurring the distinction between the unregenerate and regenerate, and raised the spectre of Pelagianism. Puritans laboured to distinguish their position on the 'flesh' and 'spirit' from that of Roman Catholicism. See, for example, Prime, *Discourse*, 3–40; Hieron, *Sermons*, 418–21; Downame, *Warfare*, 1023–41. Cf. Charles Cohen, *In God's caress: the psychology of Puritan religious experience*, New York 1986, 30–40.

[25] Thomas Carew, *Certaine godly and necessarie sermons*, London 1603 (*RSTC* 4616), sig. 17v. Puritans were, of course, under the impression that the epistle to the Ephesians was the work of the Apostle Paul, an attribution that modern biblical scholars do not make.

estate', engaged in 'perpetual conflict' against 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'.[26] From the time of their spiritual rebirth until death, Christian warriors received God's grace and spirit in sufficient measure to withstand the temptations of 'the flesh, the world, and the devill', if not in every skirmish at least 'in the course of a mans life'. Over time, the work of God's grace and spirit served to 'vivify' the spirit and 'mortify' the 'flesh' in the souls of the elect, so that 'by the end of a mans life', the 'flesh is utterly abolished and sanctification accomplished'.[27] Although regenerate Christians were forced to endure lives of 'warfare on earth', nevertheless they could take consolation in the fact that spiritual 'disturbance was a signe of sanctification' and 'a token that wee are the Lords' and that, over time, Christian warriors find 'spirituall securitie' amidst their struggles, a 'securitie which', in contrast to 'carnal securitie', was 'good and warrantable', founded 'upon God alone'.[28]

Thus, for Puritan preachers, the 'Christian warfare' was a defining characteristic of the Christian experience, and it was the principal context within which they defined their struggle with anti-Puritans. The 'Christian warfare', the spiritual struggle against temptation, was ultimately a deeply private struggle endured by every regenerate Christian. But the private struggle had a public face. The inclinations and temptations of the 'flesh', the enemy within, were mirrored in the sins of the unregenerate, making Christians prone to fall to the temptations of the 'world'. The devil, for his part, co-ordinated his temptations of individual Christians with his assault on godly people and culture using his 'instrument', the 'world'. As 'Prince of the World', Satan was able to manipulate and command the unreformed. Invoking the language of Ephesians, William Gouge explained that in their daily interactions with 'ignorant persons' who 'cry out against so much preaching' and follow the 'foolish customes of the vaine world', the godly were not simply confronting mortal creatures of 'flesh and blood'. They ultimately 'wrestle not with them, but with a higher power', for the devil 'setteth flesh and blood on worke', and 'he assisteth flesh and blood so as he is the author and finisher of the evill which they doe: they being but his vassals'.[29]

From the perspective of Puritan preachers, the battle over village greens and Sabbaths was primarily a defensive one. The culture of the

[26] Thomas Adams, *Workes*, London 1630 (*RSTC* 105), 124.

[27] Perkins, *Workes*, i. 472.

[28] John Boys, *Workes*, London 1622 (*RSTC* 3452), 531; Adams, *Workes*, 124; Baynes, *Spirituall armour*, 78; John Downame, *A treatiser of securitie*, appended to *A guide to godlinesse*, London 1622 (*RSTC* 7143), 85–6.

[29] Gouge, *Whole-armour*, 80, 59–60. Puritans assumed that the devil did not directly control the will of human beings, even of the most hardened sinners. Human corruption was such, however, that without God's spirit, humans could not help but yield to the devil's temptations.

ungodly was not only an offence to God. It destroyed souls. The work of godly preachers and magistrates to reform communities was designed to reduce, as much as possible, the damage that the devil's pastimes wreaked on souls, not only the souls of godly Christians but also the souls of the unreformed, whom the preachers called upon to repent. But while the dangers of the 'world' could be curbed, they could never be eliminated. Even if the campaigns of godly reformers were successful, ungodly people would continue to exist and, along with them, the 'persecutions' and 'temptations' of the 'world'.

Thus godly Christians and those who would be converted and brought out of the 'world' needed to recognise and understand the threat of the ungodly and the 'world'. And it was the responsibility of preachers to teach them. Puritan preachers sought to explain to audiences the underlying 'spiritual' condition of the unreformed that accounted for the various forms of ungodliness manifest in the unregenerate. No less important, Puritan preachers needed to draw a clear distinction between the spiritual state and behaviour of the unregenerate or 'natural men', who lacked God's grace and spirit, and the regenerate or 'spiritual men', who possessed God's grace and spirit.

II

There was a general consensus among Puritan preachers about the consequences of original sin and about the spiritual and psychological condition of natural man.[30] They agreed that Adam was created perfect and innocent, fully capable of fulfilling God's will and achieving eternal life. God created Adam in his image, making him 'by right the unheritour of life eternall; & in all resemblances of divine properties, in holinesse and righteousnesse like himself'.[31] As a result of the Fall, however, Adam and

[30] The Puritans' understanding of original sin and natural man was informed by the teachings of Reformed theologians on the continent. For examples of continental authors treating these themes and readily available to English audiences see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, trans. T[homas] N[orton], London 1562 (*RSTC* 4416), sigs A3v–B4r (bk I, chs iii–vi), G2r–7r (bk I, ch. xv), 16r–M3v (bk II, chs i–iii); Peter Martyr, *The commonplaces*, trans. A. Marten, London 1583 (*RSTC* 24669), 10–17, 213–52, 297–333; Zacharias Ursinus, *The summe of Christian religion*, trans. H. Parrie, Oxford 1587 (*RSTC* 24532), 10–11, 58–204; Hieronymous Zanchius, *His confession of Christian religion*, trans. anon., Cambridge 1599 (*RSTC* 26120), 31–54. For a general background on the continent see Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics*, Grand Rapids 1987, 1992. For more specialised studies with bearing on the topic of natural man see T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's doctrine of man*, Grand Rapids 1957; Mary Potter Engel, *John Calvin's perspectival anthropology*, Atlanta 1988; Susan Schreiner, *The theater of His glory: nature and the natural order in the thought of John Calvin*, Durham, NC 1991; John Patrick Donnelly, *Calvinism and scholasticism in Vermigli's doctrine of man and grace*, Leiden 1976; John Platt, *Reformed thought and scholasticism: the arguments for the existence of God in Dutch theology, 1575–1650*, Leiden 1982.   [31] Prime, *Discourse*, 1.

his posterity lost all but a 'remnant' of his original nature and acquired a new nature, a corrupt nature, the 'flesh'. Thus all descendants of Adam possessed two 'natures', the 'remnant' of Adam's created nature and a corrupt nature acquired as a consequence of the Fall, two natures that directed individuals toward contrary ends.

Puritan divines used a variety of images and concepts to describe the 'remnants' of Adam's original nature. Most commonly they invoked the imagery of the 'light of nature', the 'sparks' of that first 'heavenly light' surviving in the reason and conscience of natural man.[32] Almost as often, Puritan preachers spoke of the remnants of 'God's image' in each faculty of the soul, sometimes describing the 'light of nature' as an expression of that image.[33] The 'light of nature' provided natural man with an innate sense of the 'Law of Nature', a kind of natural equivalent to the Ten Commandments referred to by Paul in Romans. Thus, even outside the state of grace and without knowledge of revealed truths, human beings had some apprehension of God and the Commandments; they were able to discern the general principles of both the 'First Table' of Command-ments concerning God, knowing for example 'that there is a God' and 'that he is one', and the 'Second Table' concerning fellow human beings, recognising that 'we are to deale justly with all men &c'.[34] According to some Puritan divines, natural man's understanding of the first table of the law was reinforced by an 'innate sense' of divinity implanted in the soul by God, a 'divine concurring' that functioned to strengthen the 'light of nature' bearing witness to God.[35] So too some preachers emphasised that natural man could apprehend God not only by 'that inward manifestation of himselfe by natural instinct', but also by contemplating the 'great booke of the Creatures' through the faculty of reason, one of Adam's 'natural gifts' that survived the Fall albeit 'wounded and impaired' in comparison to its original state.[36]

While the 'remnants' of Adam's original nature guided natural man to God and the Law, the 'nature' he acquired as a consequence of the Fall, the 'flesh', inclined him to reject God and violate the Law. Although it was assumed that the 'flesh' made humans prone to any and all sins,

[32] Elnathan Parr, *Workes*, London 1632 (*RSTC* 19311), 36.
[33] For example, Holland, *History of Adam*, 6–7.
[34] William Pemble, *Workes*, London 1635 (*RSTC* 19570), 46–7; Parr, *Workes*, 36.
[35] Andrew Willett, *Hexapla: that is a sixe-fold commentarie upon the epistle to the Romanes*, Cambridge 1620 (*RSTC* 25691), 60. Willett provides a handy summary of the opinions of various theologians since the Church Fathers on natural man's understanding of God and the Law.
[36] Thomas Wilson, *A commentarie upon…S. Paule to the Romanes*, London 1614 (*RSTC* 25791), 66–8. Wilson is here following a tradition dating back to Augustine of distinguishing between Adam's 'supernatural' gifts, 'such as enabled to please God, and concerned eternal life', gifts wholly destroyed in the fall, and his 'natural gifts', such as his natural faculties, which were severely damaged but 'not wholly extinct'.

Puritan divines stressed that the 'flesh' especially encouraged sins against the Law of Nature, to 'whatsoever things' are most 'hateful to God and contrary to his most holy law'.[37] As Richard Capel explained, the 'flesh' 'may be said to move, and to intice us to sinne against nature', striving to bring us to 'something which is unnatural touching God; as Atheisme and Blasphemy; or touching men, as others or our selves, as unnatural killings, selfe murders, pollutions against nature, passions of dishonour, and the like'.[38] And such was the power of human corruption that natural man abandoned the 'light of nature' and yielded to the 'flesh', rendering himself unable to fulfil the Law and incapable even of a single righteous act. Puritan divines underscored that the unregenerate were wholly responsible for their corrupt and damnable condition. God revealed himself and his Law to them 'in nature', in a language they ought to have understood. And yet they rejected God and violated his Law. The 'light of nature' that remained in their souls served not as a beacon to righteousness but rather as a witness to their corruption. As Paul twice asserted of the Gentiles in Romans, the 'light of nature' rendered them 'without excuse'.[39]

Puritan divines' extreme position concerning human corruption left them with an obvious problem. Since natural men were governed by the 'flesh', it followed that every unregenerate person would violate the Law of Nature and become an atheist and a murderer, perpetrating every conceivable sin without bridle. 'Men would fling out into all kinde of wickednesse' and 'we would all bee such fooles as to thinke with our hearts and say with our mouths, There is no God', and 'there would bee nothing but murther amongst us', 'no beeing, no living amongst men'.[40] Puritan divines were well aware that such a scenario flew in the face of common sense experience. Not all natural men were overtly wicked; indeed, since the Fall, there had obviously been many people outside a state of grace who, by all appearances, were honourable and moral people. The fundamental question that Puritan preachers needed to address was how to reconcile their vision of human corruption with the apparent virtue of some natural men and specifically with the apparent civility, morality and even piety found among the unconverted in English society. Puritans did not abandon their uncompromising position on human corruption. Assuming both the utter depravity of human beings and the singular sovereignty of God, Puritan divines sought to account for

[37] William Whately, *The new birth, or a treatise of regeneration*, London 1618 (*RSTC* 25308), 9.

[38] Richard Capel, *Tentations: their nature, danger, and cure*, London 1633 (*RSTC* 4595), 53.

[39] Rom. i. 20; ii. 1. Puritans regarded Paul's description of the apostasy of the Gentiles in Romans, where the Gentiles are pictured deliberately rejecting God and his Law, as paradigmatic of all natural men.   [40] Capel, *Tentations*, 58.

the behaviour of the unregenerate in terms of divine intervention. God interceded directly in the lives of the unregenerate through his 'wise and powerfull providence', guiding them 'partly by the light of nature, and partly by the common graces of the Spirit', a form of grace that God bestowed upon all of humanity, unlike the 'saving grace' he reserved exclusively for the elect.[41] The effect of God's common grace was to restrain the 'flesh', thus enabling the otherwise powerless 'light of nature' to function, with sustenance from God, as a check on the 'flesh'.

Hence, it was not a power or quality inherent in human beings but rather God's intervention that accounted for the apparent virtues of natural men and for the differences among natural men. As Thomas Adams explained, the fact that 'some are kind, others cruel', 'some civil, others licentious', is a result not of 'more or less corruption' in humans, but rather of 'more or less limitation' born of God's common grace. Even if 'there is not the same eruption' of sin 'in all, there is in all the same corruption'; the 'seedes of all sinnes' and the 'pronenesse' to 'all evill' remained in each of the unregenerate equally. All natural men, those possessing as well as those lacking apparent virtues, were wholly unrighteous. And the fact that the differences in the character of natural men could be attributed to secondary causes should not obscure divine causality or ultimate human culpability. It is true that, in accounting for the temperaments of natural men, 'something' may be attributed to 'corporeall constitution, something to civill education', and 'something to nationall custome' for example. But ultimately 'all' must be ascribed 'to the limiting grace of God'. God's purpose was not to make natural men righteous. God intervened only because, if he did not, 'there would be no societie among men'. God acted 'to repress and stint nature…for his Churches sake, for orders sake, for the worlds sake, for mans sake', and 'for his glories sake'.[42]

Thus, God's decision to restrain the 'flesh' in unregenerate souls enabled some natural men to follow the 'light of nature' in reason and conscience. Indeed, Puritan divines acknowledged that some natural men were conscientious, struggling to conform to the dictates of conscience and suffering from 'cases of conscience' which, on the surface, resembled the spiritual struggles of regenerate Christians. But while admitting that the 'life of all men generally is full of commotion' and that natural men could suffer spiritual anguish, Puritan authors were quick to point out the radical differences between the conflicts within regenerate and un-regenerate souls.[43] As John Downame explained, the 'combate' between

[41]   Daniel Dyke, *The mystery of selfe-deceiving*, London 1614 (*RSTC* 7398), 305–6; Samuel Crooke, *The guide unto true blessednesse*, London 1613 (*RSTC* 6066), 28.

[42]   Adams, *Workes*, 1187. On the topic of God's common grace see C. Van Til, *Common grace*, Philadelphia 1947, and H. Kuiper, *Calvin and common grace*, Grand Rapids 1930.

[43]   Baynes, *Spirituall armour*, 75.

the spirit and 'flesh' in the regenerate is a 'conflict betweene grace and corruption', growing 'from a real change of their nature wrought by Gods Spirit'. The battle is waged not between faculties but within the 'same faculties' of the soul, 'spiritual wisedome' struggling against 'carnall wisedome', for example, 'in the same understanding', 'willing and nilling good and evil in the same will'. 'But in the combat which is in the unregenerate', who are without God's spirit, 'the conflict is between divers faculties, which are all carnall and corrupted, fighting one of them against another, as betweene the reason and the will' or between 'the conscience and the carnall concupiscence, passions, and affections'. Thus 'in all this conflict betweene these divers faculties, there is no enmite & contrariety betweene them in their natures'. Even when the light of nature shines bright in the unregenerate, their reason and conscience remain utterly corrupt; God's common grace neither cleanses nor changes the essential nature of their souls.[44]

Consistent with their assumption that God used his common grace 'for the good of human societie', Puritan divines assumed that the un-regenerate were able to 'goe much further' in 'all moral duties of the second Table', those which 'concerneth man', than the duties concerning 'Divinity in the first Table'.[45] It was a commonplace in Puritan practical divinity to distinguish between the 'civil' and 'spiritual' conditions of the unregenerate. As Robert Harris explained, when 'wee consider' natural man 'in a civill sense, as that hee is of such a state', of 'such authority in the common-wealth, endued with such and such morall vertues &c', then 'wee give him his due'. But when we consider him in 'a spirituall sense', as 'hee referres to God, to Gods Image, to Gods Law, &c', natural man 'is in a very poore and miserable condition'.[46] In Robert Bolton's words, the

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[44] Downame, *Warfare*, 1102, 1104–5. Downame provides a good summary of the differences between the spiritual and psychological conflict within the regenerate and unregenerate. Whereas in the souls of the regenerate, for example, the 'spirit', labouring against the 'flesh', is 'moved' by the 'true love' and 'filial feare' of God, the 'combat between conscience and affections' in the unregenerate 'ariseth from selfe-love and servile feare'. While the 'combate betweene the flesh and the spirit' is 'constant and continuall', the 'combate of conscience' proceeds 'onely by panges and fits'. Downame also explains that 'this conflict of conscience' may 'also be in the faithfull and regenerate; yet not in the part regenerate, for the sanctified will and affections doe not oppose the sanctified conscience and reason, but there is a goodly harmony between them'. 'But in the unregenerate part even the faithful themselves doe feele this conflict in them betweene conscience accursing for fear of judgement & punishment, and carnall concupiscence drawing them to sin': ibid. 1101–7.

[45] Crooke, *Guide*, 28; Pemble, *Workes*, 50, 47. For an interpretation of the differences between the 'Puritan' and 'Anglican' understanding of the two tables see J. Sears McGee, *The godly man in Stuart England: Anglicans, Puritans and the two tables, 1620–1670*, New Haven 1976.

[46] Robert Harris, *Workes*, London 1635 (*RSTC* 12816), 486. Many Puritan divines, like Harris, also included a third perspective for evaluating natural man – as he stands as a

'unregenerate man', even if able to 'expresse in action and civill honestie the absolute portraiture of Aristotles moral vertues', 'yet being out of the state of grace, is a very limbe of Satan, a child of darknesse, and one of the familie of Hell'.[47]

Invoking the words of the Apostle Paul, William Perkins explained that '*the naturall man*, that is, he that is not effectually called, *perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*: to wit, that a man must repent of his sinnes, and beleeve in Christ for the pardon of them, if he would be saved'; instead the natural man 'calleth the Gospell of Christ' and the 'preaching of Christ crucified' '*foolishnes*'.[48] In a Christian society, the unregenerate naturally absorbed fragments of Christian truths. But lacking God's spirit, they were unable to understand or apply these truths and thus were equipped only with 'worldly wisdom' and subject to the inclinations of the 'flesh'. As John Downame made clear, 'worldly wisdom can rellish nothing, but that which is subject to the senses, or may bee demonstrated by carnall reason; to which rules Gods wisedome submitteth not it selfe, but oftentimes soareth an higher pitch, speaking and doing things which are besides, above, and contrary to naturall reason'. And 'this carnal & worldly wisdom…opposeth it selfe against God, and trusteth and dependeth wholly upon it[s] owne abilities'. The unregenerate are naturally proud and 'conceited of their owne wisedom' and 'owne excellencie', relying solely on their own abilities in spiritual matters, never making 'any account of the wisedome of God, and knowledge of his will, nor' using 'any meanes appointed by God to attain unto it'.[49] And, as Perkins noted, the natural corollary of such spiritual pride is the presumption of natural men that they are 'sufficiently righteous' and 'need no repentence'.[50]

Natural men were not only prone to dismiss God's Word as 'foolishness'. They were also inclined to reject God himself, in direct violation of the Law of Nature. 'By nature', William Perkins proclaimed, 'every man is an Atheist.' Such, according to Perkins, was the word of the Apostle Paul. According to Perkins and other Puritan preachers, Paul's

creature in God's natural Creation. From this perspective, natural man was considered 'a noble creature, endued with understanding, with a reasonable appetite, with affections capable of divine objects, with apprehensions and operations suitable to his nature, being able to compare, connect, discourse, deduct, to remember, and performe other noble parts and actions'.

[47] Robert Bolton, *A discourse about the state of true happinesse*, London 1611 (*RSTC* 3228), sig. A6v, p. 19.

[48] Perkins, *Workes*, ii. 462–3. Perkins was quoting from 1 Cor. i. 23; ii. 14.

[49] Downame, *Warfare*, 388, 391, 392, 394.

[50] Perkins, *Workes*, ii. 471. The 'natural' tendencies of 'carnal reason' had implications, of course, for the Puritans' understanding of learning and education since all of these 'natural' tendencies remained within the 'flesh' of regenerate souls. For a general treatment of the subject see John Morgan, *Godly learning: Puritan attitudes towards reason, learning and education, 1560–1640*, New York 1986, chs iii, iv.

assertion concerning the Gentiles in Romans iii.10 that, 'as it is written, there is none righteous', was a reference to the passage in the Psalms, the 'fool hath said in his heart there is no God'. As Perkins explained, 'Paul here gives us to understand that the foole there mentioned must be understood of every naturall man.'[51] Puritans did not, of course, believe that all natural men were 'speculative atheists', self-conscious and articulate unbelievers. 'Natural atheisme', like all sins of the 'flesh', was understood as a matter of degree. Puritans assumed that, in most natural men, the seeds of atheism grew only to a form of 'practical atheism', a condition marked by the denial of God's existence – and his providence and justice – 'in practice' or 'in deed'.[52]

Puritans commonly measured the degree and type of atheism by the extent to which individuals either suppressed or corrupted the 'light of nature' proclaiming God's existence in their souls.[53] As Thomas Carew pointed out, just as 'by the light of nature men know there is a God', so 'by the corruption of nature', they 'seke to put out that light' and 'think there is none'.[54] While only the most 'hardened' sinners completely suppress their natural understanding of God, the preachers argued, 'the light of nature' is dimmed to some degree in all natural men, its degree of suppression generally consistent with the individual's propensity to worldly sin. For Puritans, atheism and worldliness were mutually reinforcing conditions. As Richard Capel explained, 'to say the truth, all sinne comes from Atheisme: (for who would sin, did he then verily think, that there were a God that saw all, and would punish all)', and, conversely, 'all sin tends to Atheisme, (for when we have sinned, sin doth draw towards Atheisme' and 'wipes out all notions of a Deity as much as it can)'.[55] Puritans defined atheism not only in terms of the suppression but also the corruption of the 'light of nature' by 'carnal reason', making

[51] Perkins, *Workes*, iii, 29; ii. 459. The two passages are linked in the annotations of the Geneva Bible.

[52] Nicholas Byfield, *The marrow of the oracles of God*, London 1620 (*RSTC* 4220), 43–5. Byfield's typology of atheism is typical of Puritan divines. Among the 'sinnes against God, forbidden in the first Table', he includes in the category of 'unusuall sinnes', the sin of 'atheisme', 'to defend there is no God, or to desire constantly there were no God'. First in the category of 'more usuall sins' against God is 'naturall atheisme', which is divided between one 'that customarily spends his time without God in the world', words taken from Eph. ii. 12, and one 'that conceives Atheisticall thoughts', a category that is in turn subdivided into six types, ranging from one 'that saith or thinketh, there is no profit in serving the Almightie' or that God 'neither seeth or regardeth' to one 'that hath inward reasonings whether there be a God, to which his heart inclineth', with each type linked to biblical examples.

[53] The idea that humans are naturally inclined either to suppress or pervert the soul's innate sense of God was articulated by Calvin, though he did not use the term 'atheism' to characterise the phenomenon: *Institutes*, sigs A4r–5v (bk 1, ch. iv).

[54] Thomas Carew, *Foure godlie and profitable sermons*, London 1605 (*RSTC* 4617), sig. D3v.   [55] Capel, *Tentations*, 262–3.

the sin of atheism a form of idolatry. As Perkins noted, a 'man' may 'deny God in his heart' by 'turning the true God into an Idol of mans braine', thinking, for example, that 'God is not present in all places', that 'there is no providence of God' or that 'there is no justice in God', thus imagining a God who does not see sin or is a 'God of all mercy'.[56]

Inseparable from natural man's denial of God and the Gospel was his 'enmity against God'. Again drawing upon the language and imagery of the Apostle Paul, Puritan divines assumed that the unregenerate placed themselves in an antagonistic relationship with God. As Elnathan Parr succinctly summarised it, 'God hates the flesh and it hates God', so that 'all unregenerate men are enemies to God, and God to them'. Their hatred of God, like their atheism, was associated with their worldliness: 'when they finde the Law curbing them by the threats and maledictions of it…then they hate the Law-maker'.[57] Natural man's enmity, however, was directed not only against God the Law-Maker but also God the Redeemer. 'By force' of our natural corruption, Perkins explained, 'if Christ were now living on earth' and 'if like occasion offered', natural men would 'either doe as Judas did in betraying him, or as Pilate did, deliver him to be crucified, or as the souldiers, thrust him through with their spears, or as Julian, pierce him with all manner of blasphemies.' Of course this 'ingrafted hatred' of God was thought to extend to natural man's assessment of God's children. The 'world hates them that are chosen out of the world', and 'this hatred of God's grace in man, is the beginning of all persecution'.[58]

Puritan divines insisted that, while the unregenerate 'suffer themselves to be guided and governed by Satan', they were usually unaware of it.[59] As a general rule, Satan sought to keep members of his kingdom quietly slumbering in 'carnal security', deprived 'utterly of Gods fear, of the sight and sense of their sinnes, and of the Judgements and Punishments due unto them'.[60] At the same time, the devil persuaded victims that because of the 'goodnesse of their hearts' and the 'strength of their faith', the devil had 'no power to tempt or corrupt them'.[61] And the human mind was 'so infinite a receptacle of deceitfull thoughts, one deceit succeeding and

[56] Perkins, *Workes*, ii. 459–60. In addition to defining the sin of atheism as a spiritual condition, Puritans also defined atheism as a social type, those who, like Gifford's Atheos, were 'of no religion', willing to profess any religion 'whatsoever any Prince doth set forth': Gifford, *Countrie divinitie*, 34.

[57] Parr, *Workes*, 18–19. (The pagination begins anew at the start of Parr's 'Plaine exposition upon the whole 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Chapters of…Romanes'.) The principal passage for natural man's 'enmity' is Rom. viii. 7. Parr also cites Rom. v. 10, Gal. i. 27, and James iv. 4. Willett makes the point that, while an 'enemie may bee reconciled', a relationship defined in terms of 'enmitie', such as the relationship between the 'flesh' and 'spirit' and between the 'flesh' and God, can 'never be reconciled': *Hexapla*, 355.

[58] Perkins, *Workes*, i. 163; ii. 304–5.   [59] Gouge, *Whole-armour*, 79.
[60] Downame, *Securitie*, 19–20.   [61] Jemmatt, *Spirituall trumpet*, sig. A3v.

pressing hard at the heeles of another', that the unregenerate, lacking God's 'spirit', readily yielded to Satan's temptations.[62] 'If the conscience' on occasion was 'awaknd and affrighted with the threatenings of the Law', thus beginning to 'disturb this quiet peace', then 'carnall securitie soone pacifieth these tumults, by stopping the voyce of conscience, and casting it into a deepe sleepe', overwhelming conscience with 'carnall pleasure' and 'worldly delights'.[63] The devil would sometimes tempt a worldling suffering from a bout of conscience not to 'carnal securitie' but rather to 'despaire, perswading him, that his sinnes are so horrible, his life so wicked, that God will not forgive him'. But the state of 'despair' was thought typically to be a temporary condition and a comparatively rare phenomenon among worldlings. Thomas Broad estimated that for every 'one' that the devil 'kept under his subjection' through 'despaire', he 'hath kept many hundreds' through 'presumption'.[64]

Thus Puritan divines depicted the regenerate and unregenerate as spiritual 'contraries', defining them as mirror opposites to one another in their relationship to the 'devil, world, and flesh' on the one hand and to God on the other. Whereas the regenerate were 'souldiers' waging battle against the devil, the unregenerate were the devil's 'peaceable subjects'.[65] And while regenerate Christians were servants of God and 'professors' of Christ, seeking to fulfil their duties to God and fellow human beings, the unregenerate were predisposed to reject and hate God, dismiss his Word, and 'persecute' his children. The godly, in John Preston's words, were 'Antipodes to all the world'.[66] The distance separating the spiritual conditions of the unregenerate and regenerate, 'natural' and 'spiritual men', was vast. English Puritan preachers would certainly have agreed with William Cowper, bishop of Galloway, when he pronounced the 'dispositions' of the 'naturall' and 'spirituall man' to be 'so contrary', that 'surely there is no greater difference betweene the naturall man, and the bruit beast, than is betweene the spirituall man and the naturall'.[67] The two were positioned on opposite sides of the cosmic divide. As William Gouge proclaimed, 'whosoever are not Christs subjects, are Satans vassals…for there is no middle monarchy or regiment betwixt these'.[68]

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[62] Dyke, *Mystery*, 7.   [63] Downame, *Securitie*, 20.

[64] Thomas Broad, *A touchstone for a Christian*, London 1613 (*RSTC* 3807), 29. Perkins asserted that 'a thousand perish through presumption, almost for one by desparation' while Downame argued that 'many thousand perish through presumption and securitie' for every one 'through despaire': Perkins, *Workes*, iii. 390–1; Downame, *Warfare*, 4.

[65] Carew, *Necessarie sermons*, sig. 16v.

[66] John Preston, *The deformed forme of a formall profession*, Edinburgh 1632 (*RSTC* 20215), sig. A3v.   [67] William Cowper, *Workes*, London 1626 (*RSTC* 5910), 45.

[68] Gouge, *Whole-armour*, 68. For alternative treatments of Puritan and anti-Puritan 'contraries' see Patrick Collinson, *The Puritan character*, and Peter Lake, '"A charitable Christian hatred": the godly and their enemies in the 1630s', in Christopher Durston and

The stark, uncompromising picture of the unregenerate as polar opposites of the regenerate was moderated, however, by the Puritan vision of a spectrum of unregenerate spiritual conditions. The assumption that the 'flesh' contained the seeds of every sin and that these seeds were continually nurtured by 'the flesh, the world, and the devil' – or, alternatively, limited by God and the light of nature – served to give considerable coherence to a picture of a continuum of spiritual 'estates'. The principal measure of this spectrum was the degree to which the 'light of nature' was present in mind and conscience. On the one extreme, there were the wicked and irreligious who had almost entirely suppressed the light of nature within their souls and who sinned with almost complete 'security'; their minds were 'blinded', their consciences 'seared', and their hearts 'hardened'. On the other extreme were those natural men, presumed to be few in number, in whom the light of nature burned so brightly that they were cognizant of their sins, tormented by conscience, and driven to despair. In between these extremes was the large mass of unregenerate people who to some extent suffered from 'carnal security', unable to recognise their sins and true spiritual condition, but who were also able, in some measure, to follow the dictates of nature and periodically suffered from bouts of conscience. This vision of a continuum of spiritual conditions enabled Puritan divines both to account for diversity, complexity and nuance in human nature and to bridge the apparent gulf between the commonplace behaviour of the unreformed in society and the extreme images of the unregenerate as 'contraries' to the regenerate. And both models of the unregenerate spiritual condition – the model of a continuum and the model of a 'contrary' to the regenerate – were essential to Puritan practical divinity.

III

'Ministers are appointed by God', William Whately proclaimed, 'to make it their maine worke and business to beget men to life eternall, and to nourish this life in them', a responsibility that included both bringing sinners out of the 'world' and preventing self-conscious godly Christians from falling back into the 'world'.[69] The task of converting the unregenerate was understood to be a difficult one. Because the number of elect was assumed to be small and because preachers competed against the seductive temptations of 'the flesh, the world, and the devill', Puritan divines acknowledged that 'a true and sincere Minister, lawfully called by

Jacqueline Eales (eds), *The culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700*, New York 1996, 145–83. The seminal work in alerting historians to the importance of 'contraries' and 'polarities' in early modern culture was Stuart Clark, 'Inversion, misrule and the meaning of witchcraft', *Past and Present* lxxxvii (1980), 98–127.   [69] Whately, *New birth*, 142.

God', may 'not turn many unto God' during the course of his entire ministry. Nevertheless, it was certain that there were members of God's elect who were still in the 'world', still in an unregenerate state. And it was the responsibility of the 'Minister of God, to redeeme a man penitent from hell and damnation, not that he is the meanes of working out this redemption for that wholly and onely is Christ himselfe: but he is Gods instrument and Christs instrument'.[70] As William Pemble explained, a minister stands at the pulpit 'as Gods Embassadour, speaking as from his mouth in his name to make a solemne prayer for assistance of Gods Spirit in his preaching'; 'when men are converted by his Ministery, he ascribe all to God, nothing to himselfe, who was but the saw in the worke, mans hand, &c'.[71]

The first step in conversion was to persuade sinners that they were utterly corrupt. The unregenerate had to be convinced that they were unregenerate. Just as it was essential to know the 'signs' of grace, so too people needed to be able to identify the 'signs' of being outside a state of grace. To do so, it was essential not only to describe the condition of natural man, but also to link specific traits of natural man with specific forms of behaviour and opinion found in England's parishes, showing that the latter were simply manifestations of the former. Thus, Puritan ministers contended that people's lack of enthusiasm for preaching and Scripture-reading was evidence that they were natural men who dismissed the Gospel as 'foolishness'. William Perkins argued that the reason so many churchgoers were not 'moved' when they 'heare Gods judgments due unto us for our sinnes' is because natural men instinctively imagine the 'word of God' to be 'foolishnes' and cannot imagine their own sins to be 'so hainous'. So too the predisposition of natural men to dismiss God's Word and worship was manifest in the worldly preoccupations of the 'poorer sort', the 'rich' and 'ordinary men' alike and in the various excuses offered for the neglect of the 'meanes of salvation', including the excuse that 'none are worse, then those that have so much preaching', and the opinion that it is sufficient to do 'as their forefathers did before them'.[72] And as George Gifford pointed out, the anti-Puritan who professes to know what is right and wrong, to do good works, and to have a good 'meaning' reveals himself to be a 'free will man, one of those which thinke by natural understanding to conceive the misteries of God', but who in fact understands only so much as to render him, 'as S. Paule saith', 'without excuse'.[73]

[70] Perkins, *Workes*, iii. 53, 438.   [71] Pemble, *Workes*, 69–70.
[72] Perkins, *Workes*, iii. 462–5.
[73] Gifford, *Countrie divinitie*, 49. Puritans argued that religious beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of the unreformed, including their lack of enthusiasm for sermons, their belief in salvation by merit, and their mechanistic view of religious duty, could also be explained as the residue of 'popish drosse'. Catholicism was also thought to tolerate and even

Similarly, Puritan preachers argued that the behaviour of the unreformed betrayed their 'naturall atheisme', the suppression or corruption of the light of nature within their souls. As Thomas Carew pointed out, using the words of Paul, 'they professe they know God, but by workes they deny him'. Doing only 'that which is good in their owne eyes', only 'that which they naturally like and lust after', they demonstrate either that they never consider God's 'presence, power, and justice', evidence of the suppression of the light of nature, or that they have 'wild thoughts' about God, imagining a God without his 'essenciall properties', a God who 'cannot see their workes' or punish them, evidence of the corruption of the light of nature.[74] So too, the signs of 'carnall securitie' were unmistakable in such people. As John Downame pointed out, people who profess to have 'such a strong faith and peace of conscience' and yet 'spend their time in chambering and wantonnesse', in 'singing and merriment', or in 'carelessnesse and idlenesse' demonstrate that they 'sleep soundly in securitie', so 'grievously sicke' that 'they have no sense of their disease'.[75]

It was equally important to show how the behaviour of the unreformed betrayed their natural 'emnity' against God and godliness. As Thomas Turvell asserted, anti-Puritans 'thinke they love God', but in fact show they 'hate him' when they 'doe neglect, or despise God, in the ministry of his Word, Sacraments and Sabbaths', and when they 'persecute Christ in his members, the professours of his Gospell'.[76] Samuel Hieron gave witness to the same conclusion, assuring his audience that he was not speaking 'at random' but rather from experience:

If a man should aske of mee, what thing in my opinion is, which is at this day almost in every place most hatefull, most abhorred, most irksome, most contemptible, least welcome, and least regarded; I know not (I speake unfainedly) how to answer more truly, then to say, it is the ministry and preaching of God's word.[77]

Natural man's 'ingrafted hatred' against 'Christ and his members, is as plentiful and as evident as ever it was', Perkins observed, 'for among all men none are more maligned and hated', none more 'laden with nicknames and reproachefull tearmes' than people who 'professe Christ'.[78] It was important to make clear that such hatred was manifest not simply in the notorious sinners who were quick to 'twit a man for a Puritan'.[79] As

encourage the sins of popular culture 'as dauncing, May-gaming, and the like trumperie'. From the Puritan perspective, Roman Catholicism was, of course, a 'natural religion', ideally suited for 'natural man', presumptuously over-estimating the role of human merit and will in the economy of salvation and relying on human authority and judgement, not on the Word of God. On these points see, for example, Gifford, *Countrie divinitie*, 34, 61, 69–70; Turvell, *Poore mans path-way*, 24–8; Perkins, *Workes*, ii. 301; iii. 546.

[74] Carew, *Profitable sermons*, sigs E1r, E2r, E7r, E8r–v.   [75] Downame, *Warfare*, 2.
[76] Turvell, *Poore mans path-way*, 86–7.   [77] Hieron, *Sermons*, 45.
[78] Perkins, *Workes*, i. 195–6.   [79] Jemmatt, *Spirituall trumpet*, 247.

Robert Bolton explained, there may 'be many degrees of ilnesse of unregenerate men', but 'all agree in this, they are bitter and implacable opposites to the profession and practice of sound and saving sinceritie'. Indeed, the 'meere civill honest man', one 'more sober, tolerable, and moderate than others', may be 'transported with more fierceness and rage against them, than the grosse hypocrite and notorious sinner'.[80]

Bolton's point about 'civil honest men' could not be underscored enough. 'Civil honest men' had to be situated unmistakably on the proper side of the cosmic divide precisely because they could appear to the world to be sincere Christians. Since the regenerate were still burdened by the 'flesh' and still prone to sin, and since the unregenerate could be particularly blessed with God's common grace and the light of nature, 'both the man unregenerate & regenerate' could 'doe or leave undone the same thing', thus making their behaviour, by 'outward appearances', indistinguishable. Puritan preachers therefore had to draw sharp boundaries between 'civil honest men' and regenerate Christians, making it clear that the 'same actions done by the one are approved and accepted' by God 'as lawfull and good, and of the other rejected, and condemned as evill and wicked'.[81] Well-meaning, churchgoing 'civil honest' men and women may perceive themselves to be, and others might perceive them to be, good Christians, but they, no less than hardened sinners, were enemies of God and subjects of 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'. As a strategy of practical divinity, the unmasking of the civil honest men as 'atheists' and servants of Satan provided the kind of shock that was thought necessary to awaken sinners from their slumber and alert them to their self-deceptions. Preachers assumed that, in most cases, it was only after sinners were 'pricked in heart and terrified' that 'they may become teachable' and the process of conversion, repentance and sanctification might, by the grace of God, begin.[82] The juxtaposition of commonplace behaviour and attitudes with the traits of natural man was meant to inspire such terror.

IV

The Puritan message about the true spiritual status of the unregenerate was intended not only to awaken sinners to the danger of their situation, but also to prevent self-consciously regenerate Christians from succumbing to the temptations of 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'. Indeed Puritan preachers wrote their sermons and treatises of practical divinity 'especially for their sakes who are exercised in the spirituall conflict of temptations, and afflicted in conscience in the sight and sense of their sinnes'.[83] The voices of some of those 'exercised in the spirituall conflict of temptations'

[80] Bolton, *True happinesse*, 135–6. [81] Downame, *Warfare*, 1104.
[82] Perkins, *Workes*, ii. 665. [83] Downame, *Warfare*, title page.

are well-known to historians, having been preserved in diaries, journals, letters and autobiographies. Lady Margaret Hoby, for example, dutifully recorded in a diary her regimen of attending sermons, reading Scripture, praying and meditating, carefully noting the times when, 'as ever, the divell laboreth to hinder my profittable hearinge of the word and callinge upon God'.[84] A more graphic record of spiritual struggle can be found in the papers of John Winthrop, who, while a young gentleman, lawyer and justice in Suffolk and later while leader of the Massachusetts colony, documented his experience of temptation, fall and recovery, detailing his 'continuall conflicts between the flesh and the spirit, and sometimes with Satan himself'.[85] As a minister in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Thomas Shepard recorded his spiritual struggles of the past and present, revealing his life-long battle with 'that old sore of carnal objecting and of unbelief' and his recurring experience of feeling 'a wonderful cloud of darkness and atheism over my head' and 'my weakness to see or believe God'.[86] So too London artisan Nehemiah Wallington detailed his recurring struggle to overcome temptations, especially temptations to despair; he noted later in life, after attaining some measure of 'assurance', that he continued to experience the 'old inclination to old sins', understanding this to be 'the condition of all people of God … partly through Satan's temptations, and partly from original sin still remaining in the best'.[87]

Wallington's observation faithfully echoed the message of Puritan preachers. Regenerate Christians, still burdened by the 'flesh', necessarily experienced, in some form and degree, 'anguish of mind and distresse of conscience'.[88] Puritan divines taught that the cause of Christians' 'anguish of mind' was the natural corruption that remained in the soul, the 'flesh', and the temptation of two external enemies, the 'world' and the devil. Christians could acquire 'assurance' and 'spiritual security' amidst spiritual conflict by using 'spiritual armour' and 'weapons' to withstand temptations and by developing a proper theological understanding of temptations, seeing temptations as the means by which God sanctified his

[84] *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599–1604*, ed. Dorothy M. Meads, London 1930, 66–7.
[85] *Winthrop papers*, Boston 1929–47, i. 160.
[86] Thomas Shepard, *God's plot: Puritan spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*, ed. Michael McGiffert, rev. and expanded edn, Boston 1994, 120, 103. The volume of diaries, journals, autobiographies and letters recording Puritans' spiritual struggles increases significantly in the course of the seventeenth century. See, for example, the bibliography provided by Owen C. Watkins in *The Puritan experience: studies in spiritual autobiographies*, New York 1972, 241–59.
[87] Quoted in Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's world: a Puritan artisan in seventeenth-century London*, Stanford 1985, 20.
[88] Thomas Draxe, *The Christian armorie*, London 1611 (*RSTC* 7182), sig. O1v (bk II, p. 2; pagination begins anew in bk II). Even experienced 'Christian warriors' who had achieved a large measure of 'assurance' and 'spiritual security' continued to be tempted and disturbed by the devil, world and 'flesh'. An absence of spiritual conflict and 'anguish of mind' was, of course, a sign of 'carnal security' and an unregenerate spiritual condition.

children and thus as signs of sanctification. But practical divines also stressed that, while the 'Christian warfare' within each individual soul could be won, it could also be lost. '[T]he flesh, the world, and the devill' could lure victims away from the 'golden mean' of spiritual vigilance into a state of 'carnal security' or 'despair' and thus back into the 'world'.

Puritan preachers regarded the danger of 'relapse' as a major pastoral problem, pointing out that 'back-sliding, falling away', and 'losing the first love, are the common sinnes of the professors of religion in this age', the Church being 'full' of members 'who have left their old zeale, and have *embraced the present world*'.[89] Of course, all regenerate Christians could expect to 'fall away' from the godly path from time to time. But it was assumed that God's elect eventually recovered and ultimately 'persevered' to the end of their lives. Other seemingly 'godly' people, however, never recovered. With hindsight, it could be assumed that the latter had not, in fact, been 'effectually called' and had experienced only 'temporary faith' before returning permanently to the 'world'. During the time when a reprobate enjoys a 'temporary faith', however, 'he may seeme both unto himself and to the Church of God to bee a true professor of the Gospel, and yet indeede be none'.[90]

While the differences between 'true' and 'temporary' believers could be given precise soteriological formulation in theory, the differences were less easily identifiable in practice. As Daniel Dyke observed, even the 'most judicious and discerning Christians cannot perfectly distinguish betwixt' the 'true and temporary beleever' because of their 'neere affinitie and likenesse' both in appearance and in the internal 'grounds' of religion, 'faith, repentance', and 'obedience'.[91] Not only did the effective blurring of the 'true' and 'temporary' faith make it difficult to judge the true spiritual state of others, but also many anxious Christians were unable to discern whether their own faith was 'true' or 'temporary'. Conditioned to examine their every sin and acutely aware of their every failure to 'conform' to Christian 'obedience', many conscientious godly people feared that they were 'hypocrites', that their lives and consciences betrayed an inauthentic and ultimately 'temporary' faith, that their experience of godliness – their love of God, their hatred of sin, their sense

[89] Hieron, *Sermons*, 64.
[90] Perkins, *Workes*, i. 356. On the subject of 'temporary faith' and the related theological questions see R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, Oxford 1979, especially ch. v.
[91] Dyke, *Mystery*, 57. The uncertain boundaries separating 'true' and 'temporary' faith, in effect, brought together a continuous spectrum of human spiritual conditions, ranging from the most hardened sinners on the one extreme to the most sanctified Christians on the other, with upright 'civil honest men', 'temporary believers' and 'weak Christians' somewhere in the middle. The unregenerate side of the spectrum was measured in terms of the degree of God's common grace and light of nature, the regenerate side according to the measure of God's saving grace and spirit.

of God's grace and 'spirit' – was a product of self-delusion. Such anxieties surfaced in the private writings of lay and clerical Puritans and were frequently acknowledged and addressed in sermons and treatises of practical divinity.[92] Indeed authors in the 'Christian warfare' genre focused especially on the temptations intended to persuade self-consciously godly Christians that their experience and conviction of election, vocation, repentance, faith and sanctification were fraudulent. To teach their godly audience to withstand such temptations and to gain 'assurance' of their salvation, the preachers needed to identify the sources of Christians' temptations and to clarify the dangers posed by their 'spiritual enemies'.

The unregenerate and the culture of the unregenerate represented the threat of the 'world'. In the lexicon of Puritan preachers, the unregenerate served as 'vassals' of the devil primarily in two capacities, as 'persecutors' and as 'tempters' of the godly. As 'persecutors', the unregenerate visited 'afflictions' and 'adversitie' upon the godly. When combined with the temptations of the devil and 'flesh', such 'afflictions' and 'adversitie' could lead Christians to 'despaire', 'to murmure and repine; yea (as Satan said of Job) to curse God to his face, to envie all who seeme unto us more happy than our selves, to despaire of Gods mercie, and to use unlawfull meanes, that thereby, wee may better our estate'.[93] Puritan preachers warned that even the commonplace behaviour of the unregenerate threatened to discourage Christians from keeping the godly path. As William Jemmatt pointed out, the godly were routinely confronted with 'scoffers' who 'put nicknames, and jests, and flouts upon Professors'. More dangerous than the 'scoffers', however, were the 'hinderers' and 'persecutors of the truth', especially those who had positions of authority in the community or who had 'authoritie over children, and servants' and may 'dishearten them by frownes, and checks, and vile usage, to make them weary of holinesse'.[94]

Puritan preachers agreed, however, that the unregenerate posed a greater danger in their role as 'tempters' than in their role as 'persecutors', for the road to 'carnal securitie' was a seductive one, paved with temptations to follow the 'world' and neglect religious duty. Puritan preachers were unanimous in urging Christians to exercise extreme caution when in the company of worldlings, for, as Thomas Gataker explained, 'evil company is' as 'infectious, as evill aiers are'. Just 'as some bodily diseases are said to be catching and contagious', so too 'a man may soone catch' a 'spiritual lethargie' by 'being in company of or drinking

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[92] Michael McGiffert notes that anxieties about being a hypocrite 'run like threads of fire' through the *Journal* of Thomas Shepard, who, at the time of writing, was an experienced pastor beginning to train the future chaplains of Harvard College. On this and other common features of the diaries, journals, letters and autobiographies see the comments by Paul Seaver in *Wallington's world*, 16–21.   [93] Downame, *Warfare*, 15.
[94] Jemmatt, *Spirituall trumpet*, 13–14.

with those that have them'.[95] The culture of the unregenerate, a culture that honoured pleasure, riches and glory, was seductive. As John Downame knew from 'lamentable experience', Christians were in danger of relapsing 'as soone as the World fauneth upon' them, tempting them with the 'bait of pleasure', the 'golden apples of riches', or the promise of 'honours and glory', 'whatsoever our corrupt minds desire'. As they 'turne aside out of the narrow path' of Christianity 'into the broad way' of the 'world', 'hereby religious servants become irreligious masters', forsaking Christ and following their 'pleasure', even 'on the Lords Day with the most prophane'.[96]

The unregenerate were dangerous to the godly precisely because the sins of the 'world' were to be found lurking within the souls of the regenerate. As Downame explained, when the 'Apostle saith, that the naturall man understandeth not the things that are of the spirit', he spoke not only of 'him who is meerely carnall, but of the unregenerate part of him who is sanctified'.[97] As a microcosm of the 'world', the 'flesh' contained the seeds of every sin found in the 'world', every sin of natural man, not only sins of worldliness but also sins against God and religion. Even the most godly Christians were threatened by an 'untaken-notice-of Atheisme' in the corruption that remained in their souls.[98] As Samuel Hieron observed, 'every man shall now and then feele a little piece of an Atheist in his owne bosome (for each man by nature is that Foole which saith in his heart there is no God)'.[99]

Puritan divines conceived of the 'flesh' not just as a passive reservoir of sin but also as an active 'tempter'. As Richard Sibbes explained, the 'flesh' makes 'every particular man…a tempter to himself'. Because it was the 'natural' condition of human beings, an integral part of who they were, the 'flesh' was able to posture as an individual's 'nearest friend of all', making it the 'most dangerous' of spiritual enemies'.[100] The 'flesh' seductively nourished the seeds of sin, luring victims 'by degree' in a very subtle, secretive, almost unnoticeable fashion.[101] Dangerous itself as the 'wombe' of sin, creating and nurturing the seeds of sin, the 'flesh' was also a 'secret traitour conspiring with Satan and the World', making humans prone to 'entertaine & further all their temptations', the 'flesh easily agreeing with the devill and the devill shaping his temptation to the desire of the flesh'.[102]

[95] Thomas Gataker, *The spirituall watch*, London 1619 (*RSTC* 11676), 55–6.
[96] Downame, *Warfare*, 14.   [97] Ibid. 1093.
[98] John Preston, *Life eternall*, London 1631 (*RSTC* 20232), 24–5.
[99] Hieron, *Sermons*, 61.
[100] Richard Sibbes, introduction to Capel, *Tentations*, sig. A6r.
[101] Capel, *Tentations*, 2.
[102] Downame, *Warfare*, 16; Jemmatt, *Spirituall trumpet*, 136. Puritan preachers commonly asserted that most temptations were 'mixt', the devil and the 'flesh' combining their temptations in such a way to make distinctions difficult to draw. They acknowledged,

The preachers advised Christians to assume that the devil was present 'in all combates whether against our owne corruptions, or against evill men, as persecutors, seducers, &c'.[103] With an understanding of every individual's spiritual condition, psychological temperament and intimate habits, the devil was able to adjust his temptations to exploit the weaknesses of each of his potential victims.[104] To those wavering between the 'world' and Christ, for example, Satan slyly suggested that 'whereas heretofore thou hast taken thy pleasure in every thynge', 'now thou must leave them' and 'live so austerely', reminding them that 'the world will note thee to be a puritane, and so thou shalt be odious unto thy frendes, who have heretofore loved thee'.[105] Similarly, 'if a man favours the truth, and give himselfe to know religion in any sort', the 'Devill will straightaway goe about to perswade him that that which he doth is sufficient to his salvation' and 'so neglect their charge and calling, and give themselves wholly to their sports and pleasures, to company keeping, or such like'.[106]

Like the 'flesh', the devil employed subtle and crafty methods to seduce self-consciously godly Christians to 'carnal securitie'. He, for example, approached godly people not as he truly was but in the 'similitude of an Angel of Light'. Knowing that the 'godly disposed' are not generally tempted to 'great villany', the devil 'shroudeth himselfe under pretence of truth', giving his temptations the 'shew of vertue and godlines' so that they appear as 'good councel'.[107] Also like the 'flesh', the devil tempted 'by degrees, by little and little', encouraging victims to 'sinne once only' and then a 'second time', 'untill at length it grow to a custome, and so past recovery'.[108]

Thus the dangers of the 'world', combined with the deceptive strategems of the devil and 'flesh', raised the spectre that self-conscious Christians, even experienced Christians, could be lured back to the 'world' gradually and imperceptibly until they were trapped in a state of 'carnal security', unable to recognise their own spiritual state and corruption. In the face of such subtle, politic and cunning enemies, it was

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however, that the 'flesh' and the devil could tempt separately, and there was some debate about the distinctions between temptations of the devil and 'flesh'. Cf. Daniel Dyke, *Two treatises, the one, of repentance, the other of Christs temptations*, London 1616 (*RSTC* 7408), 219–20; Capel, *Tentations*, 30–8.   [103] Gouge, *Whole-armour*, 60.

[104] According to Puritan divines, the devil could not directly read minds, but his powers as a spirit, his unparalleled knowledge, and his long experience enabled him to know the 'very thoughts and intents of the heart': Broad, *Christians warre*, 9–10. On the devil's powers and advantages over humans see, for example, Gouge, *Whole-armour*, 17–47.

[105] Udall, *Combate*, sig. C1v.   [106] Perkins, *Workes*, ii. 340.

[107] Thomas Bentham, *A notable and comfortable exposition upon the fourth of Mathew*, London 1578 (*RSTC* 1891), sig. E1r; Edward Philips, *Certaine godly and learned sermons*, London 1605 (*RSTC* 19853), 187; Colfe, *Comfortable treatise*, sig. D2v.

[108] Broad, *Christians warre*, 56–8.

indeed necessary to lead temperate and 'precise' lives and, above all, to remain in a constant state of vigilance.[109] 'It will be the wisedome of every Christian, undertaking any commendable action', Thomas Taylor recommended, 'to looke and begin with God', but 'ever' to 'have another eye upon Satan and his malice, both to expect it, and resolve, not to be beaten off for it'.[110] As Richard Sibbes summarised it, 'a true Christian feares a temptation in everything'.[111] Maintaining a 'militant estate', the condition of 'continuall warfare' in the soul, was the only way to prevent 'relapse' to 'carnal securitie' and to provide 'assurance' against temptations to 'despaire'.

The principal 'armour' and 'weapons' available to regenerate Christians were, of course, 'spiritual' ones such as faith, prayer, the Word and God's grace and 'spirit'. But there were also practical steps that Christians could take in the 'flesh and blood' to minimise the occasion to temptation, especially with respect to the threat of the 'world'. Such was the principal objective behind godly efforts to suppress the culture of Satan in towns and villages. Godly magistrates and ministers had the duty to 'cut downe sin, & indeavour to destroy whatsoever maketh against' the Gospel and the salvation of souls. But even if magistrates and ministers successfully curbed the flagrant abuses of the 'world', 'private Christians', charged only with the struggle 'for their owne soules safety' and the duties attendant to their household and calling, could not avoid contact with the unregenerate in the course of their daily life.[112] Puritan divines generally encouraged Christians to behave with 'civil kindnesse' and courtesy to the unregenerate and not 'to professee open enmitie against their persons', remembering that 'wee are to hate their sinnes' but 'love their persons'.[113] With regard to dealing with the 'openly ungodly and professedly prophane', however, the preachers' recommendations varied. Some urged the faithful to continue to 'perform our offices about them' as

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[109] Being 'precise' in life and 'militant' in the face of the temptations of the devil, world and 'flesh' did not mean, for Puritan divines, asceticism in daily life. Preachers recommended moderation in food and drink and allowed for recreational activities among godly people. As Thomas Gatacker explained, 'Christianity enjoyneth not, nor exacteth of us any Stoicall austeritie.' God 'hath liberally afforded us the free use of his Creatures, not for necessitie alone, but for lawfull delight too'. Christians, however, needed to be 'heedfull and carefull in this kinde, because…we are more prone to be caried away unto evill in our pleasures and delights, in mirth and game, in sport and pastime, then amiddes our sadder and more serious affaires': Gatacker, *Spirituall watch*, 46–7. Put another way, for most Puritans, the ideal of a 'golden mean' in ethical conduct, a path of moderation mid-way between asceticism and excess, was a prescription for achieving the 'golden mean' in 'spiritual' warfare, a 'militant estate' maintained in the face of temptations to the extremes of security and despair.

[110] Thomas Taylor, *Christs combate and conquest*, Cambridge 1618 (*RSTC* 23822), 5.
[111] Sibbes, introduction to Capel, *Tentations*.   [112] Gouge, *Whole-armour*, 306–7.
[113] Downame, *Warfare*, 426.

'standeth with our duty', just as they would in the company of any worldling, while others argued that it was 'needfull' to 'rebuke' those 'who desparately abuse God' with blasphemies and the like.[114] The cardinal rule, however, for dealing with the unregenerate, including – indeed especially with – 'civil honest' people, was to avoid 'having neere friendship and familiaritie with them, or any communion, and fellowship in that which is evill'.[115] Christians must never forget that the 'civil honest' no less than the 'prophane' were instruments of Satan and enemies of God, that 'evil company' was 'infectious' and the habituation to sin imperceptible, and, not least, that the devil and the 'flesh' were subtle and cunning enemies who were quick to exploit the temptations of the 'world' to lure victims back to 'carnal securitie'.[116]

Puritan preachers' teachings about the unregenerate and the 'Christian warfare' undoubtedly helped create and reinforce the 'anguish of mind' experienced by Christians worried about the state of their souls. Christians who sought to apply the preachers' advice to their daily lives could not help but suspect that many of the people with whom they associated on a regular basis, including decent 'civil honest' people, were a danger to their spiritual well-being. And warnings that godly Christians must expect to be assaulted by cunning spiritual enemies seeking the destruction of their souls and that they must fear a 'temptation in everything' surely reinforced the anxieties of conscientious Christians.

But the preachers' model of the 'Christian warfare', including their depiction of the unregenerate, provided a vocabulary to help Christians understand and manage those anxieties. Puritan practical divines acknowledged that the converted should expect to endure a life 'full of dreadfull feares' and 'solicitous cares', and they taught believers to identify the source of their 'feares' and 'cares' as the temptations and assaults of 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'.[117] With a clear understanding of the nature and origins of their anxieties, Christians

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[114] Colfe, *Comfortable treatise*, sigs S4r–v; Gatacker, *Spirituall watch*, 57.

[115] Downame, *Warfare*, 426.

[116] On the relationship between the godly and ungodly see Patrick Collinson, 'The cohabitation of the faithful with the unfaithful', in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds), *From persecution to toleration : the Glorious Revolution in England*, Oxford 1991, 51–78, and Peter Lake, '"A charitable Christian hatred"', esp. pp. 165–74. Patrick Collinson and Peter Lake have suggested that Separatists were less threatened by casual interaction with worldlings precisely because they had safely distanced their religious lives from the ungodly. For the majority of Puritans who remained within the Church of England, the ungodly were present in both their social and religious lives: Collinson, 'Cohabitation', 62–3; Peter Lake, 'William Bradshaw, AntiChrist and the community of the godly', this JOURNAL xxxvi (1985), 579–80.   [117] Bentham, *Christian conflict*, 15.

could find comfort and 'assurance'. As the preachers explained, the very experience of spiritual struggle was a sign of God's saving grace; the torment of temptation, the affliction of conscience born of an awareness of one's sins, and the consciousness of being unworthy of salvation were all symptoms of a soul engaged in 'warfare' not wallowing in 'security', a cause for hope not despair. Asserting that humans 'feele corruption not by corruption but by grace' and that the experience of spiritual struggle, though 'not joyous', should 'give them assurance' of their salvation, Puritan preachers encouraged Christians who suffered from 'dreadfull feares' and 'solicitous cares' to think of themselves as members of God's elect, as regenerate Christians who, by the grace of God, sustained a 'lively faith, bringing forth fruits of unfayned repentence', able to fulfill the 'covenant of Grace', to withstand most, if not all, of the temptations of 'the flesh, the world, and the devill', and to acquire over time greater 'Christian courage' and 'spiritual securitie', and 'so' be 'freed from horrors and feares'.[118]

Like the model of the 'Christian warefare' of which it was a part, the Puritan depiction of the unregenerate functioned not only to reinforce anxieties among the godly but also to encourage their identification as members of the elect. While Puritan preachers acknowledged that the regenerate and unregenerate shared a common humanity and common social experience, the predominant image of the unregenerate in Puritan practical divinity was that of a potential threat. Certainly the stark portrayal of the dangers and temptations of the 'world' contributed to Christians' 'anguish of mind', but the preachers' association of the behaviour, values and beliefs of anti-Puritans with the traits of natural man and their depiction of the unregenerate as 'contraries' to the regenerate clearly served to distance the godly from their unreformed neighbours and to underscore their elect status. The words of the preachers encouraged audiences to look beyond the confusing muddle of daily experience to see the stark dualism of the underlying spiritual reality. Just as decent churchgoing civil honest neighbours were betrayed as vassals of 'the flesh, the world, and the devill' by their 'formal' approach to religion and their attachment to the culture of 'recreation' and 'good neighbourhood', so too Christians who applied the words of the preachers to their lives and participated in the culture of the godly could be assured that, in spite of their periodic doubts and lapses from the 'precise' path, they were members of Christ, still burdened but not bound by 'the flesh, the world, and the devill'. And the preachers' habit of associating commonplace experience with underlying spiritual realities encouraged the faithful to locate their daily struggle in a larger cosmic

118 Perkins, *Workes*, i. 470; iii. 409; Downame, *Securitie*, 86–7.

perspective, to perceive themselves as members of a beleaguered minority, members of God's 'remnant', who, like God's children in all ages, were required to endure temptation and persecution and wage battle against the Kingdom of Darkness in the 'warfare' that began in Eden.