

Hot Protestants: A Taxonomy of English Puritanism

IAN HUGH CLARY



The terms “Puritan” and “Puritanism,” like any other socio-historical phenomena, are notoriously hard to define. Historians of early modern Britain have long disagreed as to the nature and extent of English Puritanism. The attempt to define it, according to Glenn Miller, “is one of the most frustrating tasks in all of scholarship.”¹ John Coffey emotively explains, “Historians have agonized over its definition.”² One only has to survey introductory matters in major Puritan studies to see this difficulty first hand.

It is the intent of this essay to evaluate the debate over how “Puritan” and “Puritanism” should be defined and offer adjudication, seeking an adequate, if not general description of the terms—one that concurs with a number of recent Puritan studies. Reasons for the difficulty will first be offered, followed by a survey of various taxonomies that Puritan historians have held and concluding with an attempt at a general definition.

Brian H. Cosby is right when he says, “The need to define the term is particularly urgent, given the recent interest in Puritan literature, theology and culture.”³ The mass of Puritan reprints has been foundational to the reception of Reformed theology in many church circles. However, in terms of being able to offer a clear understanding,

1. Glenn Miller, “Puritanism: A Survey,” in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 27, 3 (Spring 1972), 170.

2. John Coffey, “Puritanism, evangelicalism and the evangelical protestant tradition,” in Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, eds., *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Academic, 2008), 255.

3. Brian H. Cosby, “Toward a Definition of ‘Puritan’ and ‘Puritanism’: A Study in Puritan Historiography,” *Churchman* 122, 4 (2008), 297.

the variegated nature of Puritanism tends to be downplayed as certain works are emphasized to the neglect of others. It is requisite for historians to recognize such popular limitations and strive to move beyond them to seek a definition that accounts for the breadth and diversity of Puritan thought. It is hoped that this essay will be an added encouragement to the list of historians who are already of this mindset.

Reasons for the Difficulty

A number of reasons can account for the challenge historians face when defining “Puritan” and “Puritanism.” As noted, one has to do with the unavoidable, popular notions of Puritanism driven by the necessarily selective nature of Puritan reprints. Although Puritan writings maintained a lasting influence through the eighteenth century, it was in the nineteenth century that they became available on a wider scale in British and North American evangelicalism. This largely had to do with the Puritan reprints that made their way into the hands of lay people. There was, in Coffey’s words, a “buoyant demand for the classics of Puritan devotional literature.”⁴ A number of publishers maintained this tradition in the twentieth century. In evangelical circles today, where the Puritans are rightly revered for their theology and piety, there is a tendency to view the Puritans as a distinct and homogenous group of pastors and theologians. As a result, the works of particular Puritans form a “new Puritan canon.”⁵ Coffey lists the polemical theology of Richard Baxter, John Goodwin, and Tobias Crisp, alongside the prophecies of Anna Trapnel, the works of John Milton and Roger Williams, and anything by the General Baptists as examples of those who, to continue the canonical metaphor, were left in the “Nag Hammadi” of the Puritan wasteland. Certain nostalgia appertains to any consideration of “the Puritan era” and those Puritans who have been marked out as giants. Books such as Peter Lewis’s *The Genius of Puritanism*,⁶ although in many ways a helpful introduction, tend to lend credence to the notion that Puritan-

4. John Coffey, “Puritan legacies,” in John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 337. See Coffey for a list of Puritan authors whose works were reprinted in the nineteenth century.

5. *Ibid.*, 339.

6. Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism* (Haywards Heath, Sussex: Carey Publications, 1975).

ism was a monolithic movement distinguished by its piety, Calvinism, and anti-Anglican posture.⁷

The great Welsh preacher of the twentieth century, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, is probably the fountainhead of many current notions of Puritanism. In his influential article, “Puritanism and Its Origins,” that was originally a paper delivered at the Puritan Conference in 1971,⁸ Lloyd-Jones follows the scholarship of John F. H. New by defining the Puritans against their Anglican antagonists.⁹ Lloyd-Jones compares the controversial setting of the Puritans with the ecclesiastical conflicts that he was involved in with British Anglicans: “[T]he most important reason for considering this particular subject [Puritanism] now is our situation today. We are back in a position very similar to that of the sixteenth century.”¹⁰ While much can be learned from debates in church history—and the parallels Lloyd-Jones highlights are apparent—he ran the risk of seeing too much of his own context in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and defined Puritanism accordingly. Hence the distinction he makes between Puritanism and Anglicanism.

Lloyd-Jones approvingly summarizes New’s position: “New... goes so far as to say that there was always a fundamental difference between the Puritan and Anglican in matters of fundamental doctrine, such as the doctrine of man, the doctrine of the church, the doctrine of the sacraments, and doctrine in respect of eschatology.”¹¹ Lloyd-Jones comments, “He may go a little too far, but I am convinced that on the whole he is essentially right.”¹² The Doctor does nuance the distinction between earlier Anglicanism that includes Richard Greenham, Richard Rogers, and William Perkins and the “true Anglicanism” that “as such only really emerged with Richard Hooker.”¹³ But he argues that what was “crystallized” in Hooker was inherent in those early Anglicans. Later in the chapter, Lloyd-Jones

7. *Ibid.*, 12–13. Lewis refers to Puritanism as a “cuckoo in the Anglican nest” (*ibid.*, 15).

8. D. M. Lloyd-Jones, “Puritanism and Its Origins,” in *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 238.

9. John F. H. New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of Their Opposition, 1558–1640* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964).

10. Lloyd-Jones, “Puritanism and Its Origins,” 238.

11. *Ibid.*, 239–240.

12. *Ibid.*, 240.

13. *Ibid.*

speaks of what he terms “Anglican Puritans,” an appellation designated for Puritan ministers in the established church before the Great Ejection of 1662. However, this “Ejection” spelled the end of Anglican Puritanism.¹⁴ Afterwards, Lloyd-Jones casts Anglicanism in a very negative light against Puritanism: “The Puritan always wants to go back to the New Testament only, the Anglican is also concerned about tradition and custom and continuity. Anglicanism has always put an emphasis on continuity; that is why, today, she is regarded by many as ‘the bridge Church.’ She has always claimed to be Catholic as well as Reformed.”¹⁵

However, recent Puritan scholarship does not completely agree with this assessment. The work of Patrick Collinson in particular has questioned New’s concept of the stark antithesis between Anglicanism and Puritanism, demonstrating that it does not bear the weight of historical evidence but rather assumes what it should have proven by argument.¹⁶ Collinson reorients Anglicanism (an anachronism) as part of the broader Reformed community. Both the Puritan and the “formalist,” as Collinson would prefer to call Anglicans,¹⁷ were self-consciously Protestant and Reformed. The early seventeenth-century “*Ecclesia Anglicana* was conscious of a solidarity with the whole body of the Reformed church in Europe which was not compromised by a sense of national identity or the fact of institutional independence.”¹⁸ Neither Puritans nor Anglicans were ashamed of the Genevan Reformation; many of the earlier Elizabethan bishops had been Marian exiles.¹⁹ Calvinists were found in both parties and Coffey reminds us that the Church of England was founded upon Calvinistic principles, as in the case of Thomas Cranmer’s *Prayer Book* and *Thirty-Nine Arti-*

14. *Ibid.*, 254–255.

15. *Ibid.*, 257.

16. Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); “A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan” in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31.4 (October 1980): 483–488; “The Godly: Aspects of Popular Protestantism” in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, History Series 23 (London: Hambledon Press, 1983), 1–17.

17. Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625*, The Ford Lectures 1979 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 107–111.

18. Collinson, “A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan,” 485.

19. A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 2nd ed. (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 369.

des. He also points to Archbishops like Parker, Grindal, Whitgift, and Abbott who were “firmly Reformed.”²⁰ In the words of A. G. Dickens, “They [Puritans] did not want to leave the Church of England but to reform it from within; in fact until the Laudian years they represented an elite establishment rather than a rebellious minority.”²¹

Rather than a contemporaneous but distinct offshoot, Puritanism was an outgrowth of Anglicanism, and the so-called moderate Puritans (to use Peter Lake’s terminology) maintained a general relationship to the Church of England. The difference between the Anglican and the Puritan was one of emphasis or degree, not of kind.²² In the words of John Spurr, “The puritan was not necessarily a distinct breed from the church-going ‘conformist.’”²³ Or, as Collinson famously put it, both Anglicans and Puritans were Protestants, but the latter were that “hotter sort of Protestant.”²⁴ If he is correct, and this paper will seek to argue that he is, then the relationship that New and Lloyd-Jones set up is incorrect.

Parenthetically, it is worth mentioning that this in no way devalues the conflict that Lloyd-Jones found himself in. Questions of whether he was right or wrong in taking a stand against liberalism and those evangelicals who tolerated it are irrelevant to this discussion (this author thinks he was right). The point is that Lloyd-Jones misconstrued the technical, historical definition of “Puritan” and “Puritanism.” This has resulted in a misapprehension of these terms in subsequent evangelicalism that rightly looks up to Lloyd-Jones as the elder statesman of twentieth-century Reformed theology.

A second reason for the difficulty in defining Puritanism involves the transitional nature of the Puritan period. Some historians view the Puritans as the last survivors of the Middle Ages. They were significantly influenced by Aristotelian cosmology, their ethics were expressed “in the form of an almost endless, sophistic casuistry,” and their political philosophy maintained the “classical ideal of an ordered

20. Coffey, “Puritanism, evangelicalism and the evangelical protestant tradition,” 256. Cf. Dickens, *English Reformation*, 368–369.

21. *Ibid.*, 374.

22. John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603–1689* (Hampshire, England: MacMillan Press, 1998), 4.

23. *Ibid.*, 4.

24. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 27.

society.”²⁵ Other historians, however, observe the Puritans as participants in the contemporary world because they inhabited a society “which had begun to assume the patterns of modernity.”²⁶ The Puritans stood between two worlds that were both similar and different. They adopted much of what had preceded them in Patristic and Medieval thinking—especially in terms of theological method—and they adapted to the currents of change that were precipitated by the Renaissance and Reformation.²⁷

This makes trying to generalize select elements of their thought unwise. It requires the historian to look at individual Puritans primarily and evaluate them on their own terms, making allowance for similarities and differences between Puritans without having to either blend them into an artificial unity or divide them into an unnecessary diversity—what Spurr refers to as “the ‘horizontal’ picture of puritanism.”²⁸ Or, as Collinson advises, “Puritanism...should be defined with respect to the Puritans, and not *vice versa*.”²⁹

As well, historians must be sympathetic in recognizing certain influences. For instance, they generally followed the theological method of schoolmen like Thomas Aquinas. Such influences must be enabled to stand unhindered instead of being refit according to the theological bias of the historian.³⁰ It also requires an awareness of theological discontinuity with the past due to the fact that the Puritans were indeed Protestants and developed their theology along a consistently Protestant trajectory, taking into account the theological formulations of the Reformation. They were also children of the Renaissance and the methods of humanism shaped the way they thought and wrote.

25. Miller, “Puritanism,” 169.

26. *Ibid.*

27. In this regard, the Puritans were in accord with the broader Reformed orthodox community. Cf. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics Volume One: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2003), 33–37.

28. Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 4.

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

30. This is involved in the greater issue of Protestant scholasticism that has bearing on our understanding of the Puritans. For more on scholasticism and Reformed orthodoxy, see Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Orthodoxy Volume One*; as well as the collection of essays in Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment Studies in Christian History and Thought* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005).

A third reason for the difficulty in determining who and what the Puritans were is the failure of many historians to recognize the definition the term “Puritan” itself had throughout church history.³¹ It must always be kept in mind, as Professor Collinson sharply warns, that “Puritan” was originally a slur that those we now call Puritans would not have relished owning. For a person in Elizabethan England to refer to a minister as a Puritan was tantamount to calling someone today a “bigot, killjoy or extremist.”³²

Initially, “Puritan” was not a term of self-identification or self-recognition; rather, its opponents were the ones who gleefully recruited it. If one were to maintain a strict definition following this early course, theological convictions would have little to do with how a Puritan was marked out against other Protestants. Arminians within the Church of England are responsible for taking the term from its common use as a sociological pejorative and giving it theological distinction.³³ They redefined the Puritan not merely as a killjoy, but as an orthodox Calvinist, thus quickly growing the numbers of Puritans in the Church of England.³⁴ For the Puritans, they preferred to think of themselves collectively as “the godly,” “the faithful,” or “God’s elect.”³⁵ Indeed, many wanted the term Puritan to disappear altogether because of its negative connotations.

During the English Civil War, the Royalists took to labeling as Puritan those on the Parliamentary side. After the Revolution in the mid-seventeenth century, the term was used of Nonconformists who sought greater reformation in the church. In our day, to call someone “puritanical” is tantamount to calling a person a “fundamentalist.” It conjures up images of religious fanatics akin to those who fly airplanes

31. For a detailed survey of the uses of the term “Puritan,” see Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 17–27.

32. Coffey, “Puritanism, evangelicalism and the evangelical protestant tradition,” 255.

33. Cf. Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590–1640* (Oxford, 1987).

34. Collinson, “A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan,” 487.

35. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason, “Who Were the Puritans?” in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 17. Of course, individual Puritans themselves would not have used such monikers, as they often regarded themselves in a self-abasing manner in relation to the holiness and perfection of God. I owe thanks to Joel Beeke for thoughts on this clarification.

into large buildings. This latter misunderstanding does not correspond to the reality of essential Puritanism, but rather to a Victorian misconstruction. The likely culprit for this enduring anti-Puritan bias is Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Of this, Leland Ryken comments, "Hawthorne (who wrote two centuries after the original Puritans) used the Puritans in his story for *satiric* purposes, and it is a convention of satire to exaggerate the negative features of the thing being attacked. It is a great tragedy that the only picture many people have of the Puritans comes from works of literary satire that make no pretense of being sources of accurate history."³⁶

John Shaw, a seventeenth-century man from Yorkshire, summarizes the difficulty in pinning down a strict definition:

How have the people of God been scorned and nicknamed a long time [as] Waldenses, Lollards, Lutherans, Huguenots, Precisians, Puritans.... The word Puritan, in the mouth of an Arminian signifies an orthodox divine, in the mouth of a drunkard signifies a sober man, in the mouth of a papist signifies a protestant.³⁷

All of this serves as a lesson to remember when one is reading about the Puritans: a careful understanding must be maintained of how the term is used in source material. It cannot be taken for granted that the way one author uses the words "Puritan" or "Puritanism" is the same as another. And when reading secondary sources, one must beware of those historians who import their own faulty definitions on earlier authors. This can lead to confusion. Thinking again of the already discussed dichotomy between Anglican and Puritan that some historians have posited, Collinson says, "The persistently pejorative history of the term Puritan leads us to a paradox which makes nonsense of any scheme of categorisation for which 'Anglican' and 'Puritan' are hard and fast entities."³⁸

A Taxonomy of Taxonomies

Keeping the difficulties mentioned above in mind, the following summary of attempts to define Puritanism evaluates scholars chronologically, beginning in the late nineteenth century with John Brown

36. Leland Ryken, *The Puritans As They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), 189. Emphasis his. Cf. Dickens, *English Reformation*, 370.

37. Cited in Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 24.

38. Collinson, "A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan," 487.

and concluding with the recent publication of *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*. Due to space limitations this list is necessarily selective, but those key studies that have shaped the face of Puritan studies in the last generation are included.

John Brown (1830–1922) was an English Congregationalist, and his *The English Puritans: The Rise and Fall of the Puritan Movement* is written from his denominational concern for religious and political freedom.³⁹ In the preface to this work, Brown summarizes his two-fold understanding of Puritanism: “It was first of all religious in character. The early puritans had no political views, yet their religious opinions worked out to political results.”⁴⁰ Those political results became apparent in the seventeenth century where Puritanism “became the recognized name of that party in the State which contended for the constitutional rights and liberties of the people as against the encroachments of the Crown.”⁴¹ However, Puritanism manifested itself throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. “The fundamental idea of Puritanism...was the supreme authority of Scripture brought to bear upon the conscience as opposed to an unenlightened reliance on the priesthood and the outward ordinances of the Church.”⁴² Though he understands scriptural authority to be the fundamental idea of Puritanism, Brown expands upon this: “Under all its forms, reverence for Scripture, and for the sovereign majesty of God, as severe morality, popular sympathies and a fervent attachment to the cause of civil freedom have been the signs and tokens of the puritan spirit.”⁴³

Brown understands Puritanism to be a “distinct” and “definite period in English history” and, consistent with the political tones of his earlier definition, he sets its limits using political landmarks.⁴⁴ He understands Puritanism to have spanned the period of one hundred years: “From the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558 to the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658.”⁴⁵ He summarizes the movements to

39. John Brown, *The English Puritans: The Rise and Fall of the Puritan Movement* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 1998).

40. *Ibid.*, 13.

41. *Ibid.*, 16.

42. *Ibid.*, 17.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, 18.

45. *Ibid.*

and from Puritanism thus: “We can trace puritanism, taking, as an historical movement, a definite line including its rise, development, ascendancy, and ultimate downfall.”⁴⁶ It is the burden of *The English Puritans* to spell out the historical details of this rise and fall. In his conclusion, Brown says, “To this question of Puritanism, then, as to so many others, there are two sides, one of serious estimate, and another of burlesque travesty.... Puritan institutions in the seventeenth century fell with Cromwell, but puritan ideas did not fall with the institutions in which they had been embodied. They had done a great and permanent work in the sacred cause of liberty.”⁴⁷ Thus, for Brown, Puritanism was a religiously motivated, political movement that stood in stark contrast to the civil government of early modern Britain.

In his well-known work, *The Rise of Puritanism*,⁴⁸ Columbia University professor William Haller takes a significantly different approach to defining his subject than Brown. In fact, Haller wonders if defining Puritanism is worth the effort. In the opening sentence of his book, he says, “Who was the first Puritan and who may prove to be the last are questions one need not try to answer.”⁴⁹ It is Haller’s contention that “there were Puritans before the name was invented, and there probably will continue to be Puritans long after it has ceased to be a common epithet.”⁵⁰ Haller, writing from a literary perspective, traces Puritan thought as far back in English history as the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer. He says that “Puritanism, so called, was nothing new or totally unrelated to the past but something old, deep-seated, and English, with roots reaching far back into medieval life.”⁵¹ Puritanism is a “movement for a reform of religion” that began with “the successors of Chaucer’s parson early in the reign of Elizabeth” and “led to the founding of New England and the revolutionizing of English society.”⁵² Haller regards this Puritan desire for church reform as a “spiritual outlook, way of life and mode of expression”⁵³ that be-

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 153.

48. William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (Morningside Heights, New York: Columbia University Press, 1938).

49. Ibid., 3.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 5.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 9.

gan in the late sixteenth century during the Elizabethan Settlement. The Puritans were a “spiritual brotherhood”⁵⁴ whose main mode of communicating the need for reform was found in the medium of preaching. Haller’s work is largely not accepted by contemporary historians for its Whig interpretation of history following the political influence of S. R. Gardiner.⁵⁵

One of the most significant historians of Puritanism, whose work is still cited as authoritative, is the late Geoffrey Nuttall, one-time professor at New College, London. Although he wrote much on the period, his *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*⁵⁶ is likely his most important book relating to the definition of Puritanism. In it Nuttall uses the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as an entry point into a broader examination of the Puritan mindset as it related to key doctrinal themes of the period, such as the authoritative relationship between Word and Spirit, prayer; preaching, the sacraments, liberty, politics, and soteriology. Peter Lake places this approach under the “intrinsic school” of Puritan historiography that was “almost entirely concerned with Puritan religion and Puritan theology.”⁵⁷ Nuttall pays little attention to Puritanism’s political or sociological context. As a result of his influence, historians of the English Revolution have again regarded religion as a significant factor contributing to it — something lost in antecedent histories.

In the introduction to a recent edition of the work, Lake says, “The book represents an attempt to recreate, to imaginatively inhabit, and to analyse the thought world, the spiritual climate or atmosphere of radical Puritan piety and to relate that piety backward to trends and tendencies in prewar and contemporary moderate Puritanism and forward to the emergence of the Quakers.”⁵⁸

Nuttall understands Puritanism both in a narrow sense, ex-

54. *Ibid.*, 49ff.

55. Peter Lake, “Introduction,” in Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), x.

56. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (1947; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

57. Peter Lake, “The historiography of Puritanism” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 349. The extrinsic school was concerned primarily with social and economic concerns and left religion to the side.

58. Lake, “Introduction,” xix.

cluding the Separatists, and in a wide sense including them.⁵⁹ He categorizes the Puritans into three parties: the middle, exemplified by Richard Baxter and John Owen;⁶⁰ the conservatives, who were mainly Presbyterians, both Scottish and English,⁶¹ and the radicals, who were Congregationalists.⁶² This third party was further subdivided into the Baptists and the Quakers.⁶³ Beyond the fringe, though logically related to the Puritans, were the radical sects of the Levellers, the Muggletonians, the Seekers, and the Ranters. By reading Nuttall, one is given a wide-ranging survey of the religious perspectives of seventeenth-century Britain.

In his arrangement, Nuttall prefers to follow a logical sequence of categorization that he believes offers greater clarity than a chronological treatment that would move from conservative to radical.⁶⁴ He favors a logical handling of Puritanism based upon ideas. In his opinion, a schema that follows chronology over-simplifies cross-denominational agreements between Puritans. It also runs the risk of falsifying the sequence of events due to the historian's potential desire to maintain a particular theory. Puritan influence cut theologically across denominational lines, and thus to associate one theological view with a particular denomination fails to apply proper nuance.⁶⁵ Lake calls Nuttall's approach "dynamic" and "open-ended" and argues that it is "not some syllogistic attempt to define in fixed formulas the central beliefs or determining characteristics of Puritanism."⁶⁶ This is the reason why Nuttall can include Quakers like George Fox as Puritans, although Fox drew heavy criticism from Puritans like John Owen.⁶⁷

Basil Hall, who taught at the University of Cambridge, wrote an important article on Puritanism simply titled, "Puritanism: The Problem of Definition"⁶⁸ in the series, *Studies in Church History*,

59. Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 9.

60. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

61. *Ibid.*, 11–12.

62. *Ibid.*, 12–13.

63. *Ibid.*, 13–14.

64. *Ibid.*, 14.

65. *Ibid.*, 14–15.

66. *Ibid.*, xxi.

67. Cf. Michael A. G. Haykin, "John Owen and the Challenge of the Quakers," in Robert W. Oliver ed., *John Owen: The Man and His Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2002), 131–155.

68. Basil Hall, "Puritanism: The Problem of Definition," in G. J. Cuming ed.,

published by The Ecclesiastical History Society. Hall argues that Puritanism was primarily an ecclesiastical movement. The term itself was first used in 1563 in a more limited sense than today.⁶⁹ At the time of writing, historians emphasized the economic and political discussion of Puritanism, but disregarded “its primarily and intensely religious significance.”⁷⁰ The term is “inflated” because it can be applied to various groups who held to mutually exclusive positions on doctrine (especially Calvinism) and church-state relations. Hall notes, “[W]hen the word means all these then it ceases to define. Puritanism, originally a useful coin of some value, has become overminted and ended in headlong inflation.”⁷¹ Later, building on the theme of definitional inflation, Hall says, “Perhaps nothing can now prevent most writers from describing Browne, Penry, Robinson, Milton, Cromwell, Bunyan as Puritans alongside of Cartwright, Travers, Perkins, and Preston who were Puritans in fact.”⁷²

While more recent historians have argued that because of the diversity within Puritanism a more general definition should be given, Hall argues that such diversity demands greater specificity. The term “Puritan” should be abandoned altogether in favor of more strict denominational categories such as Anglican, Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist, Fifth-Monarchist, Quaker, Leveller, Ranter, and others⁷³—“these provide more precise information than ‘Puritan.’”⁷⁴ The problem with this, however, is obvious: how does one define each of these terms? If Thomas Cranmer, William Laud, John Newton, J. C. Ryle, J. I. Packer, John A. T. Robinson, and Shelby Spong are all Anglicans, what is an Anglican?

For Hall, if the term Puritan is to be maintained for conventional use, it should be understood to refer to one who remained in the Church of England. After 1642, the term Puritan lost all significance because of the arrival of the aforementioned denominations.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has already been discussed in this essay

Studies in Church History Volume II (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1965), 283–296.

69. *Ibid.*, 287.

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, 293.

73. *Ibid.*, 294.

74. *Ibid.*, 296.

regarding his division of Puritan and Anglican following the work of John F. H. New. For Lloyd-Jones, this dichotomy is in the end rooted in Puritanism's concern for the purity of the church. Puritanism "is ultimately a mentality, a spirit. True Puritanism, I argue, is ultimately found in Presbyterianism.... It is found in Non-conformity, in Independency and the Baptists."⁷⁵ This Puritan spirit manifests itself across all ages and is found as early as 1524 in Tyndale⁷⁶ and later in Cartwright, Owen, Goodwin, and even Spurgeon. But whoever the person is, if they have this spirit, they will be "primarily concerned about a pure church, a truly Reformed church."⁷⁷

Lloyd-Jones was critical of Basil Hall's understanding of Puritanism beginning in "1567,"⁷⁸ when the term was first used (Hall actually dated it to 1563⁷⁹). For Lloyd-Jones, this gives Puritanism too restricted a meaning. Because it is a spirit, Puritanism transcends any mere label. Lloyd-Jones traces the Puritan spirit back to Tyndale because "it is clear that two of the great characteristics of Puritanism began to show themselves in Tyndale."⁸⁰ These two characteristics were his efforts to produce a Bible in vernacular translation apart from the authority of the bishops, and his leaving of England to the Continent without royal assent.⁸¹ Both of these actions were an affront to any authority that comes not from God, which is the essence of Puritanism. The Puritan attitude "means the putting of truth before questions of tradition and authority, and an insistence upon liberty to serve God in the way which you believe is the true way."⁸² Cosby summarizes Lloyd-Jones' view well: "Puritanism was not a reactionary movement against Anglicanism, but against ecclesiastical and political authority in general."⁸³

James I. Packer was a colleague of Lloyd-Jones for many years and worked with The Doctor on the Puritan Conference that was held yearly at Westminster Chapel, London, in the twentieth century.

75. Lloyd-Jones, "Puritanism and Its Origins," 258.

76. *Ibid.*, 240.

77. *Ibid.*, 258.

78. *Ibid.*, 240.

79. Hall, "Puritanism," 287.

80. Lloyd-Jones, "Puritanism and Its Origins," 240.

81. *Ibid.*, 241.

82. *Ibid.*

83. Cosby, "Toward a Definition of 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism,'" 304.

He was also a pupil of Geoffrey Nuttall. Packer is the doyen of evangelical historiography and has done much to make important Puritan writings accessible to pastors and lay people. His book, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*,⁸⁴ has become a classic of Christian devotion. The second chapter of this book is called “Puritanism as a Movement of Revival,” which was originally published in *The Evangelical Quarterly* in 1980,⁸⁵ hence its earlier placement in this chronological taxonomy. This essay will follow the pagination of the book form of this article.

The title of the article gives away Packer’s perspective on Puritanism: it was a movement of revival. And while “Puritanism was, at its heart, a movement of spiritual revival,”⁸⁶ Packer does follow the convention of historians who offer a more precise definition: “Puritanism I define as that movement in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England which sought further reformation and renewal in the Church of England than the Elizabethan Settlement allowed.”⁸⁷ Packer understands the variety of Puritanism and that the term itself is imprecise. “Puritan” was the epithet applied to five overlapping groups of people: clergy who chafed under the *Prayer Book*; advocates of Presbyterianism; those who practiced Calvinistic piety; doctrinal Calvinists; and gentry who showed public support for the things of God.⁸⁸ Puritanism was a clergy-led movement that spanned a century from 1564 to 1662.

Yet, while church reform was the impetus for the Puritan movement, at its root was a desire for and an experience of revival. Packer writes:

Revival I define as a work of God by his Spirit through his word bringing the spiritually dead to living faith in Christ and renewing the inner life of Christians who have grown slack and sleepy. In revival God makes old things new, giving new power to law and gospel and new spiritual awareness to those whose hearts and consciences had been blind, hard and cold. Revival thus ani-

84. J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1990).

85. J. I. Packer, “Puritanism as a Movement of Revival,” in *The Evangelical Quarterly* 52.1 (January 1980): 2–16.

86. Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 37.

87. *Ibid.*, 35.

88. *Ibid.*

mates or reanimates churches and Christian groups to make a spiritual and moral impact on communities.⁸⁹

Using the book of Acts as a paradigm, Packer understands revival to be “an essentially corporate phenomenon in which God sovereignly shows his hand, visits his people, extends his kingdom, and glorifies his name.”⁹⁰

Packer’s examination of primary sources shows that the Puritans had a preeminent concern for revival. This was something that they had been seeking within the Church of England and in English society as a whole. Upon examining their devotional literature, whether sermons, evangelistic books, casuistic books, or paraenetic books, he observes, “The literature as a whole is remarkably homogeneous, and its purpose is constant—to induce faith, repentance, assurance, and joyful zeal in the life of pilgrimage, conflict and good works to which the saints are called; in other words, to create and sustain a spiritual condition for which personal revival is the truly appropriate name.”⁹¹ The ultimate goal in all of this was to see God glorified in the salvation of sinners.

The desire that the Puritans had for revival, according to Packer, was finally met. Revival is the only way that the spiritual blessing that increased throughout the seventeenth century, before the Restoration, can be understood.⁹² And revival was again continued in the Evangelical movement of the eighteenth century, a century that was heavily dependent upon the Puritans in terms of theology and piety.⁹³

Cosby, in his survey of Packer’s definition, expresses confusion over Packer’s apparent ambiguity when it comes to setting limits on Puritanism. On one page, Packer argues that Puritanism died in 1705 with John Howe, the “last of the giants.”⁹⁴ However, later in the book, Packer refers to Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones as Puritans. In light of this, Cosby asks: “On what

89. *Ibid.*, 36.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*, 42.

92. *Ibid.*

93. Packer’s insights here have bearing on the question of continuity and discontinuity between the Puritan movement and evangelicalism. For more, see Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (B & H Academic, 2008).

94. Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 60.

grounds can men who lived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries be called ‘Puritans’ when ‘Puritanism’ ended in 1705?”⁹⁵ Unfortunately, Cosby fails to quote the qualifiers that Packer places on each of these men. For instance, Packer refers to Edwards as “that pure Puritan *born out of due time*”⁹⁶ and Spurgeon and Lloyd-Jones as “*latter-day Puritans*.”⁹⁷ Neither of these descriptions leaves one to believe that Packer actually considered these men to be Puritans properly speaking, but rather they imbibed the spirit of Puritanism generally.

John Spurr, of the University of Wales, Swansea, has written an important book called *English Puritanism 1603–1689* that has become a standard reference on the subject. In it he argues that Puritanism is hard to characterize due to the assortment of ways in which it can be described, such as Dissenter, Separatist, or Nonconformist. Spurr recognizes the term “Puritan” to be dynamic, that it changed “in response to the world around it.”⁹⁸ However, the term also “denotes a cluster of ideas, attitudes and habits, all built upon the experience of justification, election and regeneration, and this in turn differentiates puritans from other groups such as conformists or the Quakers.”⁹⁹ The differentiation, according to Spurr, was so stark that “the puritans could recognise each other as brethren.”¹⁰⁰ Groups that were distinct from the “mainstream Puritans” flanked them on both sides. On the one side were the conformists, those who remained in the Church of England. On the other side were the sects such as the Quakers who were related to the Puritans theologically to a certain degree, yet who were “socially isolated, politically suspect and espousing separatism.”¹⁰¹ Although the boundaries of both flanks are hard to define, the general nature of both helps to distinguish the mainstream Puritans from those of either a more conservative or radical bent.

Internally, a cluster of ideas, attitudes, and habits identified the Puritans and distinguished them from their opponents. These consisted of an observable valuation of knowledge, piety, and morality.¹⁰²

95. Cosby, “Toward a Definition of ‘Puritan’ and ‘Puritanism,’” 299.

96. Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 46. Emphasis mine.

97. *Ibid.*, 69. Emphasis mine.

98. Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 7.

99. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

100. *Ibid.*, 8.

101. *Ibid.*, 7.

102. *Ibid.*, 15.

Puritan values cut across a wide demographic of clerical, denominational, vocational, class, gender, and educational borders.¹⁰³ Preaching, sermon attendance, scriptural study, self-examination, prayer, soteriological concern, hatred of the papacy, Calvinism, an interest in providence, and sabbatarianism all characterized Puritanism.¹⁰⁴ Spurr explains the “essence of Puritanism” that extended across the seventeenth century thusly:

It grows out of the individual’s conviction that they have been personally saved by God, elected to salvation by a merciful God for no merit of their own; and that, as a consequence of this election, they must lead a life of visible piety, must be a member of a church modeled on the pattern of the New Testament, and must work to make their community and nation a model Christian society.¹⁰⁵

As much as the Puritans were distinct from the conformist or the sectarian, marking out those specific distinctions beyond the generalizations noted above proves difficult. Therefore, it is important to understand Puritanism as a fluid and dynamic movement characterized by qualities that could apply to other groups. In terms of chronological limitations, Spurr believes that Puritanism began around the time of Elizabeth’s coronation—the word “Puritan” was first used in 1560—and ended with the Act of Toleration in 1689. It was around this period that many of the influential Puritans such as Goodwin and Owen died.

Patrick Collinson is hard to fit into the chronology of this catalog due to the length of time that he has been writing on the subject of Puritanism. His most influential early work is *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, published in 1967, which is still a standard introduction. Yet he continues to write and even recently published a chapter called “Antipuritanism” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*.¹⁰⁶ Lake

103. *Ibid.*, 15–16.

104. *Ibid.*, 15.

105. *Ibid.*, 5. One wonders how an Arminian like John Goodwin would fit into this definition, as Goodwin would have denied being “elected to salvation by a merciful God for no merit of [his] own.”

106. Patrick Collinson, “Antipuritanism,” in John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 19–33.

calls Collinson's work "a series of brilliant studies" and his book on the Elizabethan Puritans a "brilliant analysis."¹⁰⁷ Coffey refers to him as "the leading historian of Puritanism"¹⁰⁸ who has addressed the problem of Puritan definition "with new rigour and sophistication."¹⁰⁹ In the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion*, Coffey and Paul Lim refer to Collinson as "the doyen of historians of Puritanism."¹¹⁰ Collinson was Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge and is currently a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

As well as his work on Puritanism, Collinson has written on the English Reformation. In fact, he sees the Puritan movement as a second stage of the English Reformation. This second stage took the principles of the Reformation and applied them to the life of English society. In many ways, Collinson is revisionist against traditional ways of understanding Puritanism. To use Lake's language, he is neither of the extrinsic school that emphasized the sociological, political, and economic impact of Puritanism, nor is he of the intrinsic school that observed Puritanism from the inside of a confessional perspective, emphasizing its religious nature.¹¹¹ According to Lake, Collinson shows that

Puritanism's patronage links with central members of the establishment and its ideological links with mainstream Protestantism were so abidingly strong as to call any notion of a radical Puritan opposition, or of Puritanism as a revolutionary ideology, into the most serious question.¹¹²

A large part of Collinson's reorienting of Puritanism involves rethinking its relationship to the established church and Protestantism as a whole. In his view, the Puritans were not different in kind from the conformists in the Church of England, though they were to be dis-

107. Lake, "Introduction," xii–xiii.

108. John Coffey, "Letters by Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661)," in Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason, *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 94.

109. Coffey, "Puritanism, evangelicalism and the evangelical protestant tradition," 255.

110. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, "Introduction," in John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10.

111. Cf. Lake, "Historiography of Puritanism," 349–351.

112. *Ibid.*, 351.

tinguished from them. “Evidently,” writes Collinson, “what is called Puritanism in many of the sources cannot be readily distinguished in the field from mere protestantism, the protestantism, that is, of the convinced, the instructed and the zealous.”¹¹³ Collinson is famous for calling the Puritans “those hotter sort of Protestants.”¹¹⁴ These hot Protestants were differentiated by the ardour of their Protestantism and their emphasis on voluntary religion and fervent Christian devotion.

Another hallmark of Collinson’s understanding of Puritanism is his constant reminder to historians that the name “Puritan” was derogatory, like Lollard and Huguenot before it,¹¹⁵ and was the invention of the Antipuritans: “‘Puritans’ were so identified by Antipuritans, out of an intense dislike of all that those people stood for, and it was some considerable time before this stereotypical, antithetical stigma hardened into something almost tangible, a word which instantly evoked a widely shared set of assumptions and prejudices; longer still before it was acknowledged and accepted as an honourable badge by those to whom it was attached.”¹¹⁶ Accordingly, “[i]n the first instance, ‘Puritans’ were Puritans in the eye of the beholder.”¹¹⁷

As a result of the ambiguity of Puritanism in regard to identity and terminology, any attempt to give a specific definition of Puritanism is self-defeating. However, though Collinson has argued that the term “Puritanism” is highly imprecise, he nonetheless maintains its conventional usage because the Puritans could be distinguished as hot Protestants. And, “Although the image of the ‘Puritan’ was polemically constructed, it bore eloquent testimony to the angular presence of the godly.”¹¹⁸ At their basic level, the Puritans were part of a movement that wanted further reformation.¹¹⁹

Peter Lake, although highly appreciative of Collinson’s work (note how many times he uses the word “brilliant” in his *Cambridge Companion* article), does have some reservations. According to Lake,

113. Collinson, “The Godly,” 1.

114. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 27.

115. Collinson, “The Godly,” 1.

116. Collinson, “Antipuritanism,” 19.

117. Ibid. Cf. Collinson, “A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan,” 487.

118. Coffey, “Puritanism, evangelicalism and the evangelical protestant tradition,” 256.

119. Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 13–15.

Collinson's view is "inherently political, therefore contingent (and in some ways circular)."¹²⁰ It was inherently political because Collinson preferred to think of Puritanism as a movement. "The resulting approach was arguably circular because, if 'Puritanism' *was* a (political) movement, then, when there was no such concerted movement for further reformation, 'Puritanism' would disappear until a (or the) movement emerged again."¹²¹ As a movement, it took on popular and voluntary notions of religion and at its base "was a series of social and pietistic practices and networks, the appeal of which was not restricted to any one social group or 'class.'"¹²² This moved Puritanism from a political definition and into a "cultural or social" one, which "tended to privilege Puritanism's integrative and gradualist tendencies over its polarising and radicalising potentials."¹²³

As much as Collinson has offered balance to the perspective that sees Puritanism as utterly distinct from Anglicanism, he has in turn swung to the other side of center on the spectrum and neglects the fact that Puritanism naturally led to a severing of relations with the established church. This is manifested in Collinson's early dating of the end of Puritanism at 1625 and his belief that Puritanism was "not a prelude or a seed bed for 'the Puritan revolution.'"¹²⁴

Finally, two recent works on Puritanism have offered definitions based upon the long history of Puritan scholarship, namely, Kelly Kapic and Randall Gleason's *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics* and Coffey and Lim's *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*. In the introductory matter to both books, Puritanism is defined in more general terms, seemingly learning from the mistake of being too precise as those in the past.

Kapic and Gleason's book is a collection of essays offering biographical accounts of key Puritans and each one's most important work. They offer a "more inclusive definition that fits a growing scholarly consensus."¹²⁵ According to them, "Puritans should not be limited strictly to radical Protestant nonconformists, but rather to a much broader movement of individuals distinguished by a cluster of char-

120. Lake, "Historiography of Puritanism," 352.

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Ibid.*, 354.

123. *Ibid.*, 354–355.

124. *Ibid.*, 355.

125. Kapic and Gleason, "Who Were the Puritans?," 17.

acteristics that transcends their political, ecclesiastical, and religious differences.”¹²⁶ Throughout their essay they offer seven subheadings that bring together this “cluster of characteristics.” Puritanism can be summarized as: 1) a movement of spirituality that 2) lays stress on communion with God and 3) is united in dependence on the Bible. The Puritans were 4) predominantly Augustinian in their anthropology and soteriology and 5) placed great emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. In terms of the church, the Puritans were 6) troubled with the incipient Catholicism within the Church of England and, following Packer, Puritanism was 7) a movement of revival.¹²⁷

Coffey and Lim have done a great service for those seeking an introduction to Puritanism. There has long been a need for a book such as *The Cambridge Companion*, and though there are some omissions (such as the theology of the Puritans), by and large it is an excellent resource.

Like Kapic and Gleason, Coffey and Lim offer a list of sorts that helps readers obtain a grasp of how Puritanism can be defined. 1) Puritanism was a variety of Protestantism and the Puritans were heirs of the Reformation and emphasized the slogans *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *sola scriptura*; 2) Puritanism was linked with the Calvinist stream of the Reformation and thus stressed simplicity in worship and unconditional predestination; 3) Puritanism was a distinctive and intense variety of Reformed Protestantism that was a product of its environment in the English church; 4) Puritanism was a fissiparous variety of Reformed Protestantism and naturally went beyond the Church of England and branched off into different streams, such as Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, the Baptists, the Quakers, and other sects; 5) Puritanism was an international brand of Protestantism that spread further than England into North America as well as Ireland, Wales, the Continent, and even the Caribbean.¹²⁸

Coffey and Lim take a later date for the ending of the Puritan era. In England, they follow scholarly consent that closes the period in the late seventeenth century and, in North America, a little later, in the 1730s. Although they are quick to note that Puritanism properly

126. Ibid.

127. Ibid., 24–31.

128. Coffey and Lim, “Introduction,” 2–6.

speaking is ended, it maintains an “enduring legacy”¹²⁹ that fed into Dissent and evangelicalism and that continues to leave a lasting impression on the world.¹³⁰

A Definitional Settlement

Considering all that has been said thus far about the problems inherent in defining Puritanism and the wide spectrum of academic opinion on what constitutes a Puritan, it is wise to take a careful and broad course when seeking to offer an opinion on the matter of identifying what Puritanism was and how long it lasted. The following will offer arbitration, seeking to retain the best of what has been said already.

First of all, summary observations of what has been said are in order. There can be no doubt that Puritanism was a complex movement that housed many differing views politically and theologically. In their ranks were those who maintained conformity to the Church of England and those who separated from it, whether of their own will or by political force. As well, evangelical Calvinists like William Perkins or John Owen are understood as Puritans alongside Amyraldians like Richard Baxter, Arminians like John Goodwin, and the General Baptists and Antinomians like Tobias Crisp. That such variety can be housed under the one name “Puritan” indicates that a broad definition must necessarily be given.

However, though there is such variety, a number of key ideas have been discerned that mark Puritanism out as a distinct movement, broad though it is. And because the godly could distinguish themselves, even from like-minded conformists, a distinction is possible today. And at its base this movement is discernible by an overriding theme that is common to all stripes of Puritan.

Finally, Patrick Collinson is right to argue that the term “Puritan” itself was not one originally owned by those we now call Puritans; rather, it was an invention by their opponents and was used in English society as a smear. Nevertheless, “Puritan” and “Puritanism” have long been used in histories of Puritanism and the fact that its original use was negative should not necessarily pull historians away from convention so long as distinguishing marks are apparent.

129. Cf. Coffey, “Puritan legacies.”

130. Coffey and Lim, “Introduction,” 7.

Therefore, to posit a final definition, this author will seek to augment and build upon a recent definition given by Brian Cosby in his *Churchman* article “Toward a Definition of ‘Puritan’ and ‘Puritanism’: A Study in Puritan Historiography.”

After evaluating a number of definitions of Puritan and Puritanism, Cosby offers this: “A ‘Puritan’ was one who, politically, reacted against the *via media* of the Elizabethan Settlement in favour of a more thorough reformation in England; who, socially, promoted evangelism, catechism, and spiritual nourishment through the preaching and teaching of the Bible; who, theologically, held the views of Luther’s doctrine of faith (*sola fide*), Calvin’s doctrine of grace (*sola gratia*), and the Reformers’ doctrine of Scripture (*sola scriptura*); and who, devotionally, strove for personal holiness, a practical faith, communion with God, and the glory of God in all things.”¹³¹

While much of what Cosby said is good, there are certain points that need to be modified or abandoned. First of all, he believes that Puritanism was a reaction against the Elizabethan *via media*, “a perceived compromise between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.”¹³² But this does not take into account the early Puritans like Richard Greenham, who were willing to compromise on the use of vestments so long as they were given the freedom to preach the gospel in their pulpits. It would be better to say that the Puritan was one who reacted against the *enforcement* of the English *Prayer Book* as a means of compelling conformity to a political authority. It must be taken into account that many Puritans used the *Prayer Book* alongside other forms of worship and that it was only when pressure from the top bore down upon them that the early Puritans agitated for reform.

Cosby includes “Calvin’s doctrine of grace (*sola gratia*)” in his definition, but this does not take into account those Arminian Puritans like John Goodwin who denied what Calvin taught. While a definition should not necessarily be augmented for an exception, in the case of the General Baptists, who were numerous, the exception is significant. It might be better to emphasize *sola gratia* without reference to Calvin, because although Arminians would deny predestination and election, they (inconsistently) affirm that salvation is by God’s grace apart from works.

131. Cosby, “Toward a Definition of ‘Puritan’ and ‘Puritanism,’” 307.

132. *Ibid.*

Related to the influence of the Continental Reformation on the Puritans, Cosby neglects to include the influence of Patristic and Medieval theology. The Puritans were not innovators when it came to the doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity. They were rooted firmly in the stream of western, Latin theology, and therefore had much agreement with their Roman Catholic antagonists. Such influence is crucial to maintaining a balanced perspective on who the Puritans were. It also protects against thinking that the only good church history to be studied is that which comes after the Reformation.

Finally, Cosby intentionally excludes any notion that Puritanism can go beyond the borders of England. Those who left England for New England are not rightly called Puritans, but should be thought of as “Separatists.”¹³³ This is so, according to Cosby, for two reasons: first, those who left England “forfeited the objective of thoroughly reforming the Church *in* England;”¹³⁴ second, those who did leave were socially isolated. “Both of these things,” argues Cosby, “were unacceptable to mainstream Puritans.”¹³⁵

Cosby fails to appropriate three important points. The first, until the American Revolution, when the United States broke away from the English monarchy, New England was still, technically speaking, a part of England. Believing that those who left for New England were Puritans is simply to “locate the Puritan in England.” Second, many Puritans who left for New England returned to fight in the English Civil War against the monarchy. Were these Separatists in New England, but when they landed on English soil they were again Puritans? Third, if those in New England could not be Puritans because they “forfeited the objective of thoroughly reforming the Church *in* England,” what of those Puritans who technically speaking were Separatists? Or what of the Presbyterians or Independents? Should we think that because John Owen was not able to thoroughly reform the church from the inside that somehow he was not a Puritan?

Cosby has much that is good in his definition and it should be appropriated. Therefore, the following augmented definition is offered:

A “Puritan” was one who considered himself as “godly,” who

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid. Emphasis his.

135. Ibid., 307–308.

politically, reacted against enforced forms of medieval-style worship during and after the Elizabethan Settlement in favor of a more thorough reformation in the English church; who, socially, promoted evangelism, catechizing, and spiritual nourishment through the preaching and teaching of the Bible; who, theologically, held to the best of catholic theology such as the christological and trinitarian formulations of the early church; and held to the Protestant doctrines of faith (*sola fide*), grace (*sola gratia*) and Scripture (*sola scriptura*); and who, devotionally, strove for personal holiness, a practical faith, communion with God, and the glory of God in all things.

This definition keeps with Collinson's desire to maintain a proper historical use of the term "Puritan" and measure it against the Puritans' own self-understanding. It also acknowledges Packer's emphasis on revival as the essence of Puritanism in terms of its social promotion of evangelism and the desire to see God glorified in all things. The inclusiveness that Kapic and Gleason sought for is maintained in that those of a mild Armyraldian, Arminian, or Antinomian bent, though inconsistent with the general Reformed tone of Puritanism, can still be included.

In terms of setting time parameters on the Puritan movement, a broad range is wisest. Although William Tyndale is surely a direct precursor to the Puritans, he was technically a part of Collinson's first stage of the English Reformation. Therefore, the best place to understand Puritanism's beginning is the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. Puritans such as William Perkins and Richard Greenham should be looked to as the first Puritans.

Technically speaking, the Puritan movement ended politically with the Act of Toleration in 1689, where religious freedom was allowed to the ejected ministers to worship as Nonconformists. However, there were still those alive who had spent most of their ministries fighting for freedom and tolerance—the spirit of Puritanism—such as John Howe. Therefore, following Packer, it is appropriate to see the end of Puritanism with the death of Howe in 1705, "the last of the giants."

If the longevity of debate over how to define Puritanism is any indication, this essay will likely not be the last word on the subject. While Cosby's definition is good, it needed some enhancing. Hopefully some move towards clarity has been offered.