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978-1-107-07448-4 - Reformation Unbound: Protestant Visions of Reform in England, 1525–1590

Karl Gunther

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction: Remembering the Tuesday Sabbath*

In a book about baptism, written in 1533 while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London on charges of heresy, an English evangelical named John Frith made a startling suggestion. Instead of observing the Sabbath on Sunday as Christians had done for a millennium and a half, the English should start observing it on Monday or Tuesday. According to Frith, this reform was essential to combat the superstition that the medieval church had implanted in the hearts of the English people. The day on which the Sabbath was observed was *adiaphora*, a “thing indifferent” like many other ceremonies and orders that in themselves made Christian worship “nether the better nor worse of a myte.”<sup>1</sup> While God had commanded the Jews to celebrate the Sabbath on Saturdays, Christians were not commanded to observe the Sabbath on any specific day. The leaders of the early church were free to observe the Sabbath whenever they wanted and they *could* have continued to observe it on the same day as the Jews, but they changed the Sabbath day to Sundays “to be a perpetuall memorye that we are fre and not bound to any daye but that we may do all lawful workes to the pleasure of God & profyt of our neighbour.”<sup>2</sup> The Catholic church, however, had led the English people into bondage, teaching them that it was necessary for Christians to observe the Sabbath on Sundays, an erroneous and legalistic belief implying that salvation depended on ceremonial observance rather than on faith in Christ alone.<sup>3</sup> Because so many people held such “supersticious” and dangerously self-destructive views of ceremonies – especially after they had been warned against such errors – Frith argued that “the

<sup>1</sup> John Frith, *A myrroure or lokyng glasse wherin you may beholde the sacramente of baptisme described Anno. M.D.xcciii. Per me I.F.* (London, 1548; STC 11391), c2v. Original spelling and punctuation have been retained throughout, with abbreviations expanded, “j” substituted for “i,” and “v” for “u” where appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> Frith, *A myrroure or lokyng glasse*, c4v–c5r.

<sup>3</sup> On the late medieval church’s sabbatarian teaching, see Kenneth Parker, *The English Sabbath: A study of doctrine and discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1988), 8–23; Frith also might have been specifically responding to the claims of his *bête noire*, Thomas More: *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 6 (New Haven, CT, and London, 1981), 149.

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Seniours and ministers of the congregations” ought “to abrogate or alter those cerimonies or elles they can not escape the wrathe of God.”<sup>4</sup> Because the English were now “as superstitious in the Sondag as they [the Jews] were in the Satterdaye, yea, & we are moche madder,” it was “at this tyme very expedyent yet ones agayne to over set our Sabbaoth which is the Sondag (because the ignorante people do count it as necessary) unto the mondaye or tewysday.”<sup>5</sup> The English were “moche madder” than the Jews because whereas the Jews had direct biblical warrant for the Saturday Sabbath, Christians had no biblical warrant at all for the Sunday Sabbath.<sup>6</sup>

Needless to say, even though Henry VIII pruned the number of holy days in the 1530s, the English Reformation did not usher in a Tuesday Sabbath. Evangelical leaders like Thomas Cranmer did not seek a change in the Sabbath day, and the formularies of the Henrician and Edwardian Church of England increasingly moved in the opposite direction, defending the Sunday Sabbath as a signifier of Christ’s resurrection on a Sunday.<sup>7</sup> In 1548, the year in which Frith’s pamphlet was first published, John Hooper not only defended the custom of Sunday Sabbath observation but argued that Sunday was mandated as the Sabbath day for Christians by Scripture. Frith was a leading figure within the early evangelical movement and celebrated as a martyr after his execution in 1533, but his proposal to transfer the Sabbath day to Monday or Tuesday was deemed so unacceptable by John Foxe that when the great martyrologist edited and reprinted Frith’s works in the early 1570s, he deleted it. Foxe’s Frith was a supporter of the Sunday Sabbath – the margin read “Sabaoth kept on the Sondag” where Frith’s radical proposal would have appeared – and merely an opponent of superstitious attitudes about it.<sup>8</sup> Thomas Russell perpetuated this distortion by employing Foxe’s emended edition when he reprinted Frith’s writings in 1831, and the reliance of modern scholars on these editions continues to perpetuate this omission.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Frith, *A myrroure or lokyng glasse*, c31r-v.    <sup>5</sup> Frith, *A myrroure or lokyng glasse*, c51r.

<sup>6</sup> Frith was not the only English Protestant to advocate such views: two years earlier, his close friend and fellow exile William Tyndale had gone even further when he argued that Christians might not only change the Sabbath day but also observe the Sabbath on a ten-day or a biweekly schedule, or simply abandon its observance entirely. William Tyndale, *An answer unto Sir Thomas Mores dialogue* (Antwerp, 1531; STC 24437), 59v.

<sup>7</sup> Parker, *The English Sabbath*, 36–40.

<sup>8</sup> *The Whole workes of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doct. Barnes* (London, 1573; STC 24436), PP6v. N. T. Wright noted these omissions in his 1978 edition of Frith’s works, although the omitted sentence is unfortunately tucked away in an endnote: N. T. Wright (ed.), *The Work of John Frith* (Appleford, 1978), 52–53, 579n14.

<sup>9</sup> See Thomas Russell (ed.), *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith*, vol. 3 (London, 1831), 295; Parker, *The English Sabbath*, 34.

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Frith's call for a Tuesday Sabbath reveals one way in which evangelicals could call for a radical reformation in Tudor England, and it provides a particularly striking example of how radical visions of reform in the early English Reformation have been obscured from the historical record. Historians do not typically place early English evangelicals among the radicals of Reformation Europe. The word "radical" is notoriously slippery, but it has taken on a largely fixed meaning for historians of the Reformation: it is typically used to refer to Anabaptists, who rejected not only infant baptism but also the "magisterial" reformers' project of forming state churches, embracing instead a sectarian vision of the church as a separated community of true believers.<sup>10</sup> Radicalism in this sense of the word was exceedingly rare in the English Reformation, and English evangelicals (Frith included) regularly proclaimed their hostility to Anabaptism and their commitment to a national church under royal authority.<sup>11</sup> A more useful way of thinking about Reformation radicalism rejects essentialist definitions of what constituted radicalism and instead adopts a contextual and relative use of the term to describe ideas, attitudes, or behaviors that fundamentally challenged the status quo in ways that were more extreme and/or extensive than those adopted by other reformers.<sup>12</sup> Conceived in this way, reform programs that sought an alliance with secular authorities could be every bit

<sup>10</sup> Roland H. Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation," in *Studies on the Reformation* (Boston, 1963), 119–129; Ernst Troeltsch (trans. Olive Wyon), *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols. (New York, 1960); Hans J. Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation: Divergent Perspectives* (Kirkville, MO, 1988); Michael G. Baylor (ed. and trans.), *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge, 1991); George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd edn. (Kirkville, MO, 2000); Michael Driedger, "Anabaptism and Religious Radicalism," in Alec Ryrie (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in the European Reformations* (Basingstoke, 2006), 212–231; C. Scott Dixon, *Protestants: A History from Wittenberg to Pennsylvania 1517–1740* (Chichester, 2010), 7.

<sup>11</sup> For studies of Anabaptism and sectarian movements in England, see Irvin Buckwalter Horst, *The Radical Brethren: Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop, 1972); John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the South-East of England, 1520–1559* (London, 1983); D. Andrew Penny, *Freewill or Predestination: The Battle over Saving Grace in Mid-Tudor England* (Woodbridge, 1990); M. T. Pearse, *Between Known Men and Visible Saints: A Study in Sixteenth-Century English Dissent* (Cranbury, NJ, 1994). On evangelical hostility to Anabaptism, see especially Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1996) and Catharine Davies, *A religion of the Word: The defence of the reformation in the reign of Edward VI* (Manchester, 2002), ch. 2.

<sup>12</sup> For helpful discussions of the term "radical," see Adolf Laube, "Radicalism as a Research Problem in the History of the Early Reformation," in Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies*, 9–23; Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Radicalism in the Early Reformation: Varieties of Reformation in Church and Society," in Hillerbrand (ed.), *Radical Tendencies*, 25–41; Glenn Burgess, "Introduction," in Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (eds.), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850* (Cambridge, 2007); David R. Como, "Radical Puritanism, c. 1558–1660," in John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2008), 242; Ariel Hessayon and David Finnegan, "Introduction: Reappraising Early Modern Radicals and Radicalisms," in Hessayon and Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism in Context* (Farnham, 2011), 1–30.

as radical in their vision for change as programs that rejected the religious authority of the magistrate.<sup>13</sup> In both senses of the term, however, radicalism was treated as a foreign concept in A. G. Dickens's classic *The English Reformation*, which proclaimed that "modest and mundane reforms sprang naturally from our Tudor age, with its deep aspirations to good order in Church, commonwealth and society at large."<sup>14</sup> English Protestantism – or rather Anglicanism – was a *sui generis* form of Christianity according to Dickens, one that charted a theological middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism, since the English "have scarcely grasped the deepest implications of either Catholicism or Protestantism; we have tended to avoid the peaks and the abysses of both, and our greatest men have seldom found it easy to operate within the framework of either."<sup>15</sup> The institutional expression of this *via media* was the Church of England, an inclusive state church born out of "a Reformation of compromise and detachment, partly because these attitudes come naturally to the English temperament, partly in consequence of a patriotic distrust for foreign models, partly since both Catholic and Lutheran powers failed to comprehend our situation, most of all because the divisions between Englishmen made it safer to attempt a settlement based on balance and comprehension rather than upon a narrow orthodoxy."<sup>16</sup> Roland Bainton took a similar view of the English reformers, remarking that the English were "not passionately stirred over confessional issues" in the sixteenth century and aimed instead to draw as much of the population as possible into a state church that made "minimal and ambiguous demands."<sup>17</sup> From this perspective, the English desired a reformation that was not only *not* radical; it was inherently antiradical.

<sup>13</sup> On this point, see Laube, "Reformation as a Research Problem," 17; Ethan H. Shagan, "Clement Armstrong and the godly commonwealth: radical religion in early Tudor England," in Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002), 60–83; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (New York, 2003), 161–2.

<sup>14</sup> A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 2nd edn. (University Park, PA, 1989), 204–5.

<sup>15</sup> Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 205.

<sup>16</sup> Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 206. As Dickens put it elsewhere, "[t]he English may have been spiritually incapable of grasping the genius of Catholicism or that of Protestantism, but at least they knew how to dethrone pseudo-logic, overdogmatic theology and various sorts of clerical messiahs." A. G. Dickens, "The Reformation in England," in Joel Hurstfield (ed.), *The Reformation Crisis* (New York, 1966), 56. On the subject of English exceptionalism and the Reformation, however, it is worth remembering that E. G. Rupp argued in 1947 that "We shall be wise if we refuse to imitate those historians who loved to glorify some imaginary and splendid isolation of the English Church, as though there were something inherently disreputable in borrowing from abroad, and who shied at the word 'Continental' with something of the blushing aversion for the word of a traditional spinster. The Reformers happily were without such odd parochialism." E. G. Rupp, *Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge, 1947), 47.

<sup>17</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (Boston, 1952), 183.

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The “myth” of moderate Anglicanism has been subject to devastating critiques from a variety of perspectives over the past several decades.<sup>18</sup> As scholars like Eamon Duffy and Christopher Haigh have forcefully shown, the destructive agents of English Protestantism looked decidedly immoderate when viewed from the perspective of the practitioners of traditional religion in England – the members of the parish guilds at Morebath, for instance, or the monks dwelling in Syon Abbey.<sup>19</sup> Scholars have also powerfully disproved the notion that English reformers aimed at a *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism, and they have emphasized the deep interconnections between English and continental reformers, identifying the theology of the earliest English evangelicals with Lutheranism and then, especially from the reign of Edward VI onward, with a full-blooded Reformed theology that would forge a “Calvinist consensus” in the Elizabethan Church.<sup>20</sup> This body of scholarship has transformed our understanding of sixteenth-century English Protestantism, but radical visions of reform within English Protestantism have nevertheless remained marginal to our understanding of the early English Reformation.<sup>21</sup> This has largely been a matter of focus. Several scholars have shown that early English evangelicals could advocate sweeping social and economic reforms, but much of the finest scholarship on early English reformers has focused on figures who were decidedly evangelical, yet moderate in their inclinations and approach to reforming the

<sup>18</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, “The Myth of the English Reformation,” *Journal of British Studies* 30:1 (January 1991), 1–19; Nicholas Tyacke, “Anglican attitudes: some recent writings on English religious history, from the Reformation to the Civil War,” in *Aspects of English Protestantism, c. 1530–1700* (Manchester, 2001), 176–202; Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1992); Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993); Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Such a list must necessarily be incomplete, but would include Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford, 1986); Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (Oxford, 1987); MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*; MacCulloch, *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (New York, 2001); Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2002); Davies, *A Religion of the Word*; Alec Ryrie, “The Strange Death of Lutheran England,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53:1 (Jan. 2002), 64–92; Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 2003); Carrie Euler, *Couriers of the Gospel: England and Zurich, 1531–1558* (Zurich, 2006); Torrance Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Leiden, 2007); Diarmaid MacCulloch, “Sixteenth-century English Protestantism and the Continent,” in Dorothea Wendebourg (ed.), *Sister Reformations: The Reformation in Germany and in England* (Tübingen, 2010), 1–14.

<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the most recent studies of “radicalism” in early modern English history have focused overwhelmingly on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: see Burgess and Festenstein (eds.), *English Radicalism, 1550–1850*; Hessayon and Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism in Context*.

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church.<sup>22</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch has commented on the absence of “fiery clerical reformers independently spearheading the changes which transformed the English Church. There was no Luther to arouse the nation against the Pope, no Zwingli to turn the eating of a sausage into the downfall of a city’s traditional faith, and among the rather thin and muted ranks of English religious radicalism, no Thomas Müntzer to face death for a revolutionary new Jerusalem.”<sup>23</sup> The leader of English Protestantism was instead Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, an extremely cautious (albeit sometimes ruthless) reformer who hated radicals even more than conservatives, remained within the boundaries set by Henry VIII while the old king lived, and then pursued gradual reform under Edward VI in ways that aimed at “change accomplished with decency, order and the maximum possible degree of popular consent.”<sup>24</sup> In his study of late Henrician evangelicalism, Alec Ryrie has argued that the radical evangelical exiles of the 1540s were a “sideshow” and that the “real centres of English evangelicalism” were to be found among those who remained in England and pursued reform in less confrontational ways within the boundaries of the Henrician Church of England – an argument and focus that fit closely with the emphasis that he and other scholars have recently placed on compromise, dissimulation, and Nicodemism within English Protestantism.<sup>25</sup>

Radical visions of reform did develop within English Protestantism, of course, but they are typically treated as later developments in the course of the English Reformation. Mary Tudor’s reign proved to be a cradle of radical Protestant thought, as the experience of persecution and the restoration of Catholicism created circumstances in which “many of the habits and attitudes that belonged to life in an established Church – the

<sup>22</sup> On social and economic radicalism, see Shagan, “Clement Armstrong and the godly commonwealth”; Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, chs. 4–5; MacCulloch, *The Boy King*, ch. 3; Davies, *A religion of the Word*, ch. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, “England,” in Andrew Pettegree (ed.), *The Early Reformation in Europe* (Cambridge, 1992), 168.

<sup>24</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 144–146, quote at p. 483; also see Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485–1603* (New York, 2000), 196.

<sup>25</sup> Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, 112; Luc Racaut and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation* (Aldershot, 2005); Susan Wabuda, “Equivocation and Recantation During the English Reformation: The ‘Subtle Shadows’ of Dr Edward Crome,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44:2 (April 1993), 224–242; Andrew Pettegree, “Nicodemism and the English Reformation,” in *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot, 1996), 86–117; Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford, 2002); Angela Ranson, “Sincere Lies and Creative Truth: Recantation Strategies during the English Reformation,” *Journal of History and Cultures* 1 (2012), 1–18; Jonathan Michael Gray, *Oaths and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2012), ch. 6. Also see Lucy Bates, “The Limits of Possibility in England’s Long Reformation,” *Historical Journal* 53:4 (2010), 1058–70; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 6–9.



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habits of centuries – were temporarily discarded.”<sup>26</sup> While the vast majority of Protestants conformed to the Marian Church, waiting for better days, the most radical Protestants waged a fierce written campaign against Nicodemism, denouncing it as a heinous sin against God and one’s neighbors. Fleeing the Marian Church, they formed separatist congregations in England or exile churches in the more hospitable environs of Frankfurt, Wesel, Strassburg, Zurich, and Geneva. Notoriously, some of these exiles not only demanded separation from the Marian Church but also called for active resistance to the Marian regime and death to the queen herself. Mary’s reign was short-lived, however, and the development of radical visions of reform within English Protestantism has been identified above all with the development of puritanism. During Edward VI’s reign, “cracks in the edifice of evangelical unity began to appear” when John Hooper was appointed Bishop of Gloucester but refused to wear traditional vestments at his consecration.<sup>27</sup> Hooper’s principled stand is widely taken to mark the “first signs of the gap in comprehension” within English Protestantism between “puritans” and “conformists,” as it raised questions among English Protestants about the proper pace of reform, the locus of religious authority, and “the Church’s freedom to choose to retain institutions and observances not explicitly commanded by the Word of God.”<sup>28</sup> While proto-conformists like Archbishop Cranmer and Bishop Nicholas Ridley viewed the external forms of the church as “things indifferent” that the monarch could order as he or she saw fit, proto-puritans like Hooper demanded the elimination of ceremonies that they deemed harmful, arguing that the use of “things indifferent” was to be governed by rules regarding offense and edification laid down in Scripture. The division that Hooper’s intransigence opened up would deepen in a series of escalating controversies, next over the use of the Book of Common Prayer among the Marian exiles at Frankfurt in 1554–1555 and then again over clerical garb a decade later in the vestments controversy of 1565–1566. By the 1570s the

<sup>26</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford, 2000), 24.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480–1642*, 2nd edn. (London, 2012), 73.

<sup>28</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547–1603*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke, 2001), 69; Marshall, *Reformation England*, 89. Also see Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 345; Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stewart Realms, 1485–1603* (Harlow, 2009), 191–192; Marshall, *Reformation England*, 131; John Craig, “The growth of English Puritanism,” in Coffey and Lim (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, 37; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 72; Ronald Vander Molen, “Anglican Against Puritan: Ideological Origins during the Marian Exile,” *Church History* 42:1 (March 1973), 45; Scott Wenig, *Straightening the Altars: The Ecclesiastical Vision and Pastoral Achievements of the Progressive Bishops under Elizabeth I, 1559–1579* (New York, 2000), 75; Claire Cross, *Church and People: England 1450–1660*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1999), 107.

conflict had reached new heights, with the most radical puritans not only criticizing the Book of Common Prayer but turning their sights on the church's government and calling for the abolition of episcopacy and a revolutionary restructuring of the Church of England along presbyterian lines. As Patrick Collinson put it, these mid-Tudor arguments over *adiaphora* and church order “began a debate which lasted intermittently for more than a century,” fracturing English Protestantism and marking the point where “the geological fault-line between Anglicanism and Nonconformity, Church and Chapel, began.”<sup>29</sup>

The development of radical views of godly activism and identity within English Protestantism also tends to be associated with the puritans. Elizabethan puritans practiced a “singular” style of piety or voluntary religion, marked by their zealous devotion to sermon gadding and fasting – among other pious behaviors – which sometimes ostentatiously distinguished them from their less zealous neighbors.<sup>30</sup> They engaged in distinctive social behavior, segregating themselves from those they deemed ungodly and waging war on sin and idolatry in their communities and the nation as a whole. Puritans, as Ethan Shagan has vividly put it, were people who felt a “positive obligation to pick fights with their reprobate neighbours,” courting confrontation all in the name of producing godly order in church and society.<sup>31</sup> Local circumstances and personal temperaments obviously played a significant role in determining the level of conflict that puritans experienced, and Peter Lake especially has drawn our attention to the ways in which “moderate Puritans” avoided conflict within the Elizabethan Church and also to the ways in which “Puritanism had within it integrative and ameliorative, as well as polarising and fissiparous, impulses.”<sup>32</sup> Yet the puritans embraced an embattled mentality and tended to view conflict as a godly and necessary part of Christian life. As Lake has argued, “[i]t was perhaps the defining characteristic of puritanism that it did not shirk, indeed welcomed, the disruptive, discomfiting effects of protestant doctrine on the lives of

<sup>29</sup> Collinson, *English Puritanism* (London, 1983), 15–16.

<sup>30</sup> Collinson, *English Puritanism*, 19–20; Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (New York, 1996), 20–23.

<sup>31</sup> Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation*, 160; also see Alexandra Walsham, “The godly and popular culture,” in Coffey and Lim (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, 290.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Lake, “The historiography of Puritanism,” in Coffey and Lim (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, 356. Also see Peter Lake, *Moderate puritans and the Elizabethan church* (Cambridge, 1982); Lake, “Defining Puritanism – again?” in Francis J. Bremer (ed.), *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, 1993), 18; Lake, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2002), 520.



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individuals and on the life of the whole social organism.”<sup>33</sup> Puritans embraced “an extraordinarily polarised view of the social world” in which they were, as Collinson put it, “constrained by their own principles to relate to the community at large in a manner which, in principle, maximised social stress.”<sup>34</sup>

Beginning with Henrician evangelicals like John Frith and ending with the Elizabethan puritans, *Reformation Unbound* revisits the development of radical visions of reform and godly activism during the English Reformation. It argues that there were early English evangelicals who were envisioning the reformation in ways that were far more radical than we have hitherto recognized, and that radical ideas and attitudes that typically have been viewed as later developments had been part of the English Reformation at its start. Revisiting some of the most radical aspects of Marian Protestant thought, it argues that these ideas continued to shape the thought and activism of the hotter sort of Protestants under Elizabeth in ways that we have not previously appreciated. All of this not only revises our understanding of the intellectual boundaries of early English Protestantism, but it also has implications for how we view the development of puritanism in Elizabeth’s reign. It is undoubtedly the case that “puritanism as an historical phenomenon and episode was rooted in the particularities of the Elizabethan church settlement,” profoundly shaped by the unique political, polemical, ecclesiastical, intellectual, and social circumstances of Elizabethan England.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, as Chapters 5 and 6 argue, we still have a great deal to learn about the divisions that emerged within English Protestantism over “things indifferent” and about the circumstances that produced these divisions during the 1550s and 1560s. But by expanding our understanding of early English Protestant radicalism, this book enables us – indeed, requires us – to view some of the most radical ideas about “further reformation” and the nature of godly life that developed during Elizabeth’s reign in a new light: not as fundamentally new departures within English Protestantism, but as the continuation (and in some cases) the reappearance of ideas and tensions that had been developing within the English Reformation from its start.

The book begins by examining the ways in which evangelicals envisioned a reformed church during the reign of Henry VIII. Historians

<sup>33</sup> Lake, *Moderate puritans*, 129.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Lake, “‘A Charitable Christian Hatred’: The Godly and their Enemies in the 1630s,” in Durston and Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism*, 156; Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York, 1988), 143.

<sup>35</sup> Collinson, *English Puritanism*, 13.

widely view early English evangelicals as relatively unconcerned with issues of church government, seeing calls for root-and-branch reform of the church's government as a new development – indeed, a quintessentially presbyterian development – within Elizabethan Protestantism. Chapter 1 shows, however, that there were some Henrician evangelicals – including a figure of no less importance than William Tyndale – who were calling in print for sweeping changes to the church's polity, advocating the abolition of diocesan episcopacy, clerical hierarchy, canon law, ecclesiastical courts, and the exclusion of the clergy from any role in secular governance. A properly biblical church, these evangelicals claimed, would have a bishop in every city or parish, the election of clergy, and the parochial exercise of church discipline. A reformation of this sort would have transformed the English Church beyond all recognition and, needless to say, Henry VIII did not enact these proposed reforms, leaving the polity and governance of the newly formed Church of England largely unchanged from that of its medieval predecessor. These radical visions of ecclesiastical reform stood in stark contrast to the views outlined in official and quasi-official publications from the 1530s and early 1540s, which not only legitimated the Church of England's essentially unreformed polity but also denied that the New Testament established binding rules or models for the church, investing the monarch instead with wide-ranging authority to regulate the church's government and its external forms as he saw fit. Importantly, this was also the view held by Archbishop Cranmer, but the chapter shows how it would come under sharp attack in the 1540s by radical evangelicals who denounced it for merely cloaking "popery" under the veil of royal "policy." In many respects, then, Chapter 1 significantly revises our understanding of the intellectual contours of early English Protestantism, revealing sweeping visions of ecclesiastical change and calls for reform that are typically associated with Elizabethan presbyterians, not Henrician evangelicals. It also shows that fundamental disagreements about the government of the church, religious authority, and *adiaphora* were not later developments in the history of the English Reformation, but were developing and being openly canvassed at its very start.

Chapter 2 traces a variety of ways in which Henrician and Edwardian evangelicals envisioned the English Reformation as bringing not "peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). In a culture that was deeply devoted to the ideals of peace and unity, the division and conflict produced by the Reformation were widely taken to be great evils that needed to be eradicated. Henry VIII envisioned the establishment of a national church