

Prologue

Of the thousands of pamphlets, books, and broadsides that flooded from London presses during the revolutionary convulsions of the 1640 and 1650s, few can claim to have exerted a direct and palpable influence on the generations that followed. One work that rather improbably did so was an obscure theological tract called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, originally published in 1645 by an anonymous author identified only by his initials “E. F.” In its day, *The Marrow* had been a minor bestseller. It passed through seven editions by 1650, finally disappearing from view shortly after the Restoration. Seventy-three years after its initial publication, a Scotsman named Hog dusted off *The Marrow* and reissued it, occasioning a heated controversy that threatened to tear the Scottish Church in two. Defenders of the volume—so-called “Marrow Men”—claimed that the book represented a powerful practical exposition of the doctrine of free grace. Its detractors saw it as a deceptive threat to the orthodoxy of the Church, a work of disguised antinomianism—the heretical notion that believers were free from the Moral Law. The ensuing storm, in which the opposing sides vehemently denounced one another as “legalists” and “antinomians,” raged in press, pulpit, and church court for several years, ultimately contributing to the founding of the Secession Church in 1730.¹ By this unlikely path, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* assumed a place beside the likes of *Areopagitica* and *Leviathan* as a lasting and historically relevant artifact of the English Revolution.

¹ See D. C. Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1988) for the definitive account of the conflict.

This story is all the more extraordinary because the author of *The Marrow* was neither a Milton nor a Hobbes. Modern research has conclusively identified “E.F.” as Edward Fisher, a London barber-surgeon, amateur theologian, and sometime religious pamphleteer.² Viewed from one perspective, Fisher’s career has the aspect of a Royalist cautionary tale. His double-life, split as it was between the incongruous activities of setting bones and setting pen to paper, appears as a perfect synecdoche for the anarchy, misrule, and social inversion wrought by the puritan ascendancy. Yet Fisher’s story is more remarkable than even this would suggest. For both *The Marrow* and the controversy it sparked in Scotland had an intricate and hidden prehistory extending back into the early seventeenth century, a prehistory that shall occupy the remainder of this study.

The terms “antinomian” and “legalist” were nothing new to the British theological lexicon. As Fisher’s own preface reveals, they had been brandished with alarming frequency in England both before and during the civil wars. A “legalist,” as Fisher defined the word, was a person who had grounded his or her piety in moral reformation, “a zealous professour of Religion, performing all Christian exercises both publike and private.” Such “legal professours” might soldier on in their erroneous ways throughout their lives, dying “sure of Heaven and eternall happiness . . . and yet it maybe all this while is ignorant of Christ and his Righteousnes, and therefore establisheth his own.”³ At the other end of the spectrum were those who recognized their sinfulness, and “hearing of justification freely by grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, do applaud and magnifie that doctrine, following them that doe most preach and presse the same, seeming to be (as it were) ravished with the hearing thereof, out of a conceit that they are by Christ freely justified.” Yet they remained sinful: “these are they that can talke like believers, and yet do not walke like believers; these are they that have language like Saints, and yet have conversations like Devils: these are they that are not obedient to the Law of Christ, and therefore are justly called Antinomians.”⁴ Fisher claimed that *The Marrow* was intended to blaze a middle way between these two errors, which, as he explained, had been the cause of no little consternation among the godly: “not onely a matter of 18 or 20 years agoe, but also within these three or foure years, there hath been much a doe, both by preaching, writing, and disputing, both to reduce men out of them, and to keep them from them, and hot contentions have been on both sides, and all, I fear me, to little pur-

² D. M. McIntyre, “First Strictures on the ‘The Marrow of Modern Divinity,’” *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 10 (1938), 61-70.

³ E[dward] F[isher], *The Marrow of Modern Divinity: Touching both the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace*, 2d ed. (1646), sigs. *7v-*8v.

⁴ *Ibid.*, sigs. *8v-Ar.

pose,” for each group had merely succeeded in driving the other further into error.⁵ Here Fisher was of course referring in part to the intractable civil-war disputes between puritan radicals—Crispe, Dell, Saltmarsh, and Erbury, to name a few—and their equally committed godly opponents—men such as Thomas Edwards and John Vicars.

Yet Fisher intimated that the conflicts of the 1640s were hardly unprecedented; he explicitly dated the first rumblings of controversy over the contested issues of grace and the Moral Law to “18 or 20 years ago”—that is, to the period between 1625 and 1627. In alluding to the “hot contentions” of the 1620s, then, Fisher was in fact recalling a series of divisive theological disputes that had shaken the godly community during the later 1620s. These bitter conflicts had been sparked by the growth of a small, vocal protest group that had crystallized in opposition to prevailing styles of puritan practical divinity in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Such godly dissidents—variously and indiscriminately belittled by opponents as “antinomians,” “Familists” or “libertines”—vociferously objected to what they saw as legalistic and literal-minded tendencies inherent in mainstream puritanism. By 1629-30, there were at least nine such preachers active in London alone, dragging behind them an increasingly visible penumbra of lay disciples, admirers, and fellow-travelers. Indeed, as Fisher hinted, by late 1629, their persistent and often strident attacks on their fellow puritans had precipitated a crisis that threatened the integrity of the godly community. It is this crisis—a crisis that may justly be called “England’s antinomian controversy”—that serves as the subject of this book.

An Underground?

Fisher was in a privileged position to comment on this controversy. He claimed that he had himself been in the thrall of legalism in his early days: “I was a professour of Religion, at least a dozen yeeres, before I knew any other way to eternall life, then to be sorry for my sins, and aske forgiveness, and strive and endeavour to fulfill the Law, and keepe the Commandements, according as Master Dod and other godly men had expounded them.” He claimed that only conference with the famed puritan pastor Thomas Hooker had taught him “that I was yet but a proud Pharisee, and to shew mee the way of faith and salvation by Christ alone.”⁶ While we have no reason to suppose that he had fabricated this tale about the eminently respectable Hooker, there was another side to Fisher’s spiritual progress about which he had good reason to be less forthcoming.

⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. Av.

⁶ *Ibid.*, sigs. *8r-v.

Despite his claims to be piously threshing out a pathway between extremes of antinomianism and legalism, Fisher's critics in both seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century Scotland argued that his treatment of the subject was far from impartial, and that in fact his irenic pose served merely to camouflage his antinomian sympathies.⁷ As if to confirm their worst fears, whether antinomian or not, Edward Fisher did carry with him a deeply suspicious past. In order to reconstruct that past, we must backtrack to the last years of Charles I's Personal Rule, to a moment in which the noose of Laudian ecclesiastical pressure was slowly tightening around London's puritans.

In 1638, fearing a pending High Commission case against him, a young cutler named Giles Creech had approached the authorities with a whopping tale of a seething sectarian underworld hidden just beneath the surface of London society. Creech claimed that in his youth he had made "the acquaintance of Familists, Antinomians, Anabaptists and the like." He further admitted that he had been a "disciple of Dr [John] Everard sometimes lecturer at St Martins in the feilds whereby he became infected with those pernicious doctrines." Only a well-timed sermon by Archbishop Laud had saved him from Everarde's clutches, but now, he claimed, his vindictive coreligionists were seeking to have him prosecuted for the very errors he had repudiated, forcing him to turn informant.⁸

Creech painted a lurid picture of competing antinomian splinter groups, providing detailed lists of the members of four separate London sects, which he labeled respectively "the familists of the mount," "the familists of the Valley," "the Essentualists," and the "Antinomians," each of which adhered to a subtly different set of beliefs. At the core of this sectarian subculture, Creech identified a pair of illegal manuscript peddlers who appear to have served as a nerve-center for the London scene: "They have severall Books teaching . . . their malevolent Doctrines, whereof one is intituled H.N. his Booke. A second is called, the Rule of perfection, but especially that cursed Booke named Theologica Germanica [sic], . . . the most pestilent of all others, whereof some are in Latine, Manuscripts, written by one Fisher a Barber in the old Bayley, and one Woolstone a Scrivener in Chancery Lane."⁹

⁷ J. A., *A Manifest and Breife Discovery of some of the Errours contained in a Dialogue called the Marrow of Moderne Divinity* (1646), esp. 20; see also McIntyre, "First Strictures," 66-69, for other contemporary suspicions that the Marrowist was, as the presbyterian John Trapp put it in 1647, a "sly antinomian." Other attacks came from Thomas Blake (1653) and Richard Baxter.

⁸ PRO, SPD 16/378/241. Creech initially petitioned Archbishop Laud on 17 January 1637/8. Laud referred the matter to Sir John Lambe for investigation.

⁹ Bodleian Library, Tanner MS. 70, fols. 181r-v. This represents one of three surviving copies of Creech's deposition. The other two, which vary very slightly, may be found in PRO, SPD 16/520/85 and 16/520/86, the former of which includes Sir

Even if we remain skeptical as to the extraordinary details of this story, there can be no question that the barber-surgeon and illicit manuscript dealer here named was anything but a figment of Giles Creech's imagination: he was none other than Edward Fisher, future author of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, who tellingly conceded in his preface that although he had drawn liberally on the publications of "known and approved" authors in constructing his book, "some part of it my manuscripts have afforded me."¹⁰ If Creech is to be trusted, it is clear that Fisher's library was stocked with works by authors who were anything but "approved": Hendrik Niclaes, alias HN, was the infamous, messianic founder of the Dutch sect, the Family of Love. Familism, an offshoot of earlier forms of continental anabaptism, had emerged in Holland during the middle decades of the sixteenth century. From here, it quickly spread to England, provoking a series of panic-stricken pamphlets by puritan moralists, before coming under intense pressure in the Elizabethan church courts. Yet Creech's testimony reveals that those he described as "Familists" were not (like earlier devotees) committed to the words of HN as the only source of continuing revelation. They also treasured a rare and obscure tract known as *The Rule of Perfection*. Originally published in 1609, *The Rule* was in fact the handiwork of the English Capuchin friar, William Fitch, also known as Benet of Canfield. A work of intense mystical piety, the book continued to be venerated in radical circles into the civil war years, when additional parts of it would be published for the first time by the antinomian extremist Giles Randall. Most "pestilent" of all, however, was that most notorious primer of mystical, perfectionist piety—the *Theologia Germanica*. This medieval devotional work had first been published by Luther on the eve of the Reformation, only to be recycled by a long line of radicals and spiritualists throughout the sixteenth century. In England, as on the Continent, it had apparently continued to exert its influence well into the seventeenth century.

In his investigation of Creech's allegations, Sir John Lambe received further information about the barber-surgeon and manuscript dealer Fisher. It was claimed that he "selles old bookes and got Theolog[ia] Germanica translated into English by a minister at Grendleton: called Brierly or Tenant." The men named here were Roger Brearley and Richard Tennant, the ringleaders of the notorious "Grindletonian" movement that had sprung up along the Lancashire-Yorkshire border during the first decades of the seventeenth century.

John Lambe's interlinear notes. Both State Papers copies read "H.N. his bookes," suggesting that more than one of the founder's works were in circulation. Creech's deposition was to my knowledge first analyzed by Stephen Foster.

¹⁰ Fisher, *Marrow*, sig. A2r. For definitive evidence that the man described by Creech was the barber-surgeon, Edward Fisher, see Chapter Three. See also John Davis's note in his *Obituary* of 1650, of the death of "Mr. Fisher, bookseller and barber in the Old Bailey," as cited in McIntyre, "First Strictures," 62.

Having imported this text from rural Yorkshire, Fisher seems to have sold the manuscript to the scrivener Woolstone, from whence it found its way to Everarde “who was in translating it and did two of them, one for the E[arl] of Holland and another for the E[arl] Mulgrave.”¹¹

This should not be taken as proof that Fisher was a Familist-in-disguise.¹² But as this study progresses, we shall uncover a series of connections which, when held together, corroborate Creech’s claim that the Marrowist had a checkered, indeed sectarian, history. This, in turn, allows us to glimpse a rather different vision of Fisher’s passage out of pharisaical legalism. Although he almost certainly had conferred with Hooker¹³, he had apparently also spent a good deal of time consorting with sectaries, copying out their treasured texts, and breathing in the atmosphere of London’s antinomian subculture. Here we see Fisher acting as a sort of clearinghouse for proscribed manuscripts, a focal point for a community of like-minded people that stretched from the hinterlands of Yorkshire to John Everarde’s aristocratic enclave in Kensington and beyond. What follows is an attempt to reconstruct that underground and to evaluate its historical impact.

¹¹ PRO, SPD 16/520/85, fol. 126r. Whether or not the details of this story are true, Creech was correct about the fact that John Everarde had executed a translation of the *Theologia Germanica* in the 1630s. Two contemporary manuscript copies of his translation have survived: Folger Shakespeare Library MS. V. a. 222; CUL MS. Dd. xii. 68.

¹² It is worth noting that Creech did not include Fisher in his lists of Familists and antinomians. The question of whether Fisher was an “antinomian” depends on how the term is defined. To be sure, there are certain points where his descriptions of the believer’s freedom from the Law (“you are now set free, both from the commanding and condemning power of the covenant of works,” Fisher, *Marrow*, 148 and more generally, 147-52) are similar to those of earlier antinomians. See also *ibid.*, 176-77, where once again he replicated certain antinomian arguments and referred to Robert Towne as an “evangelical man.” Yet at other points (158-61), Fisher argued that all the commandments are required of believers, although differently expressed, and not as part of the covenant of works. In this and other crucial ways, he parted company with the thoroughgoing antinomians described further on in this study. For a more complete account of Fisher’s views on the role of the Law under the Christian dispensation, see *The Marrow of Moderne Divinity. The Second Part. Touching the Most Plaine, Pithy and Spirituall Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (1648), *passim*.

¹³ See Fisher, *Marrow*, 133, 192, where he refers to Hooker as “evangelical Hooker,” and “godly Hooker,” suggesting that his affections (and probably his story) were genuine. Yet it should be noted that the only other divine who earns the title “evangelical” in the course of the *Marrow* is the altogether less respectable Robert Towne, the notorious antinomian. *Ibid.*, 177.

The notion of an “antinomian underground” is bound to be greeted with skepticism, particularly since many of the sources utilized in the following study were generated by hostile witnesses whose motives and reliability are often open to doubt.¹⁴ This is preeminently the case for Giles Creech, whose detailed and byzantine portrait of the London sectarian scene has been justly questioned by scholars.¹⁵ It is therefore essential that we establish at the outset the trustworthiness of Creech’s testimony, both to assess his claims and to provide us with a clearer vision of the community he was describing. In addition to the case of Fisher, we can identify at least two instances in which Creech named individuals whose antinomian associations can be verified, independently and beyond all doubt, through separate, nonhostile sources. Among the so-called “familists of the mount,” Creech fingered one “Hareford a Bookebinder in Paternoster Row,” to whose name Sir John Lambe appended the comment that “he binds Dr Everard his bookes and knowes all his waies.” The man described here was surely Rapha Harford, the sometime bookseller who would indeed publish John Everarde’s collected sermons in 1653, together with a reverent, personalized biography of his spiritual mentor.¹⁶

But we possess a second, extraordinary piece of evidence, which vindicates beyond all question Creech’s claim to possess intimate knowledge of the London antinomian scene. Another member of the “family of the mount” was, Creech claimed, one “Stephen Proudlove,” who “doth sell small wares with in Bishopsgate streete, in an Alley,” and who, according to Lambe, “travaile[d] up and down to faires,” peddling his goods. Meanwhile, among the “antinomians,” Creech listed another bookbinder identified only by his surname “Howse.” This man was quite possibly a relative of Edward Howes, a Londoner whose diary for the years 1643-49 survives among the Sloane Manuscripts, providing us with irrefutable confirmation of the existence of a Familist current flowing quietly beneath waters of London puritanism. Howes’s diary contains, among other things, an epistle after the style of HN, exhorting

¹⁴ For a more extensive discussion of the methodological difficulties that accompany the use of such hostile sources, see below, Appendix C.

¹⁵ See, for instance, the discussion in S. Foster, “New England and the Challenge of Heresy, 1630 to 1660: the Puritan Crisis in Transatlantic Perspective,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 38 (1981), 636-38, where Creech’s deposition is dismissed as “tainted evidence”; C. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 237, devotes only four sentences to the deposition, citing it (without even naming or mentioning Creech) as evidence that “The terms ‘Familist’ and ‘Family of Love’ were . . . applied with increasing regularity to groups or individuals suspected of holding crudely perfectionist or libertine beliefs.”

¹⁶ John Everard, *Some Gospel-Treasures Opened: Or, The Holiest of all Unwailing* (1653).

believers to continue along in the true doctrine of earthly perfection; it records two songs celebrating the “livers in love,” both of which were drawn from HN’s *Cantica*, a Familist hymnbook that had been published for the first and only time in English in the 1570s; it includes striking examples of Familist iconography; it contains notes on sermons by Robert Gell, one of civil-war London’s more notorious perfectionist preachers; and most impressively, it describes several of Howes’s “visions” (that is, dreams) together with his own manifestly allegorical readings of those immediate revelations.¹⁷ Remarkably, in one of these dreams, Howes reported seeing a vision of “Proudlove the pedler,” obviously one and the same Stephen Proudlove identified by Giles Creech as a member of the Family of the Mount in 1638.¹⁸ Here, then, is a bona fide Familist source, proving that Creech possessed intimate and reliable knowledge of London antinomianism, and confirming his picture of a small, tightly knit, and anything but imaginary community of ideological fellow travelers, stretching from the prewar period into the 1640s.

Although this community was evidently a small and cliquish one, in which insiders knew one another by name and reputation—even inhabiting one another’s dreams—we should be careful not to dismiss it as an irrelevant band of true believers, isolated from mainstream puritanism. Indeed, it will be argued throughout this study that the disputes between antinomians and their orthodox puritan antagonists were so bitter precisely because no such segregating boundary existed. The tension between them was conditioned by what John Gager has called “a fundamental law of religious dynamics: the closer the parties, the greater the potential for conflict.”¹⁹ Antinomians were considered so dangerous because in many important ways they remained members of the godly community, sharing large portions of the cultural and intellectual heritage that defined puritans as a group within the world. This was the case even for self-identifying “Familists” such as Howes, who, as it turns out, had been a close friend of John Winthrop, Jr., the son of Massachusetts’ first governor, prior to Winthrop’s departure for New England in 1631. An extraordinary series of letters from Howes to Winthrop—straddling the period between 1628 and 1644—survives among the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, allowing us to chart the course whereby Edward Howes moved from the conventional, if eccentric, godliness of his youth, to the manifestly heretical blend of puritanism, alchemy, and Familism revealed in his diary of the 1640s;

¹⁷ British Library, Sloane MS. 979, fols. 7r-16v, 11r, 15v, 18v-21v, 22r-23v, 30r-34v. See also K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 377n5.

¹⁸ British Library, Sloane MS. 979, fol. 16v.

¹⁹ J. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 143.

together, these sources, which shall be discussed in greater detail below, allow us to peer momentarily into a world—the world of Creech, Brearley, Everarde, Fisher, Howes, and their fellow antinomians—that has been lost to posterity.²⁰

²⁰ The surviving letters have been published in the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3rd series, 9 (1846), 240-58; 4th ser., 6 (1863), 467-513.

CHAPTER 2

The Sinews of the Antinomian Underground

The Nature of Antinomianism

The precise ideological contours of antinomianism shall be laid out in detail in succeeding chapters. Nonetheless, we must at the outset make an effort to determine what we mean when we use the word. What follows is a brief and compressed overview of the conclusions that are worked out at greater length below. Much like the term “puritan,” the word “antinomian” (together with siblings such as “antinomist,” “libertine,” or “Familist”) was primarily a hostile term of abuse, often used imprecisely, sloppily or maliciously for polemical purposes. Those accused of antinomianism rarely, if ever, accepted the appellation. Nevertheless, as with the terms “puritan” and “puritanism,” “antinomian” and “antinomianism” referred to a recognizable and real phenomenon, a series of shared intellectual, theological, and behavioral characteristics that set certain individuals apart from their “non-antinomian” counterparts. The word was used to describe individuals who said and did very specific things. Moreover, those who found themselves stigmatized as antinomians may not have liked the moniker, but they were fully aware that there existed very real differences between them and their opponents. That the word was used polemically and often imprecisely should not therefore blind us to the fact that those accused of antinomianism evinced a set of very particular traits and characteristics that bound them together with one another, set them apart from others, and provoked the animus of their critics. These characteristics are best described as a set of tendencies. For as we shall see below, there were in some respects significant intellectual differences between figures who can be usefully described as “antinomian.” Nevertheless, in spite of differences in

emphasis or details of argumentation, all of these figures exhibited, to a greater or lesser degree, each of the following tendencies.

Chief among these characteristics was, of course, a propensity to argue that the Mosaic Law, including the Decalogue, was in some sense abolished, abrogated, or superseded for Christians. This tendency in many ways defined and distinguished them from their contemporaries, serving as a rallying point for their evangelical efforts and a focal point for the polemic of opponents (hence, the epithet “antinomian,” meaning one who opposes the law). Yet denial of the Law was only one aspect of a more complicated mode of religiosity. For in proclaiming themselves free from the Mosaic code, antinomians were, as noted above, negating a particular version of pastoral divinity that had come to dominate the puritan community in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

This mode of practical divinity will be the subject of Chapter Four, but its basic shape may be described here. For all their attachment to the doctrines of predestination, unmerited grace, and justification by faith, English puritans had from a very early stage stressed the importance, indeed the preeminence, of moral, social, and personal reformation. The life of faith as envisioned by godly preachers involved a strenuous and unremitting struggle to do God’s will in the world—that is, to extirpate sin and to exalt and glorify God by promoting and performing his Law. In practical terms, this translated into a rigorous and disciplined mode of piety, which included Sabbatarianism, fasting, and careful self-examination, as well as intense hostility to perceived sins such as sexual immorality, drunkenness, and ceremonial idolatry. Sanctification (the lifelong process of purging sin and striving towards holiness), zealous application of the “means of grace,” and continuing repentance for transgression were taken to be the marrow of the godly life, the chief tokens and signs of a true, lively, and justifying faith. It was this rigid and preponderant obsession with divine precept and sanctification that was rejected, and rejected totally, by antinomian teachers. Those who earned the epithet “antinomian” all saw mainstream godly divinity as a new form of works-righteousness, an outward, literal, and “legalistic” religiosity that nurtured a slavish devotion to the Law. Hence, godly preachers were routinely likened to “Jews,” “rabbis,” or “papists,” while antinomian prophets often claimed to be promoting the true Christian messages of free grace and justification by faith, entirely apart from any works, legal or otherwise. This aggressive polemical posture—which throughout this study shall be termed *anti-legalism*—was shared by all antinomians, serving as our second identifying tendency.

Thus, at a practical level, the claim that the Mosaic Law no longer applied to Christians was less a rejection of all morality than a repudiation of the practices and demands of puritan pastoral divinity. In this vein, the most robust antinomians dismissed Sabbatarianism and fasting as Judaic, or “monk-

ish” practices. Christians who consoled themselves by supplicating or praying to God, hearing sermons—indeed with the performance of any “duties”—were said to be trapped in a legal or literal servitude to external elements. Most of all, the tendency of the godly to see sanctification, outward holiness, and moral reformation as evidence for divine love or grace, was denounced by antinomians as a pharisaical error. Nevertheless, in constructing this critique of mainstream puritan divinity, antinomians paradoxically borrowed rhetorical and theological resources from the reformed/puritan tradition, revealing a third identifying tendency of antinomianism—the propensity to use images and motifs common to puritanism to attack mainstream puritanism itself.

In this way, for instance, antinomians often portrayed themselves (in piously protestant fashion) as heirs of a long-standing legacy of anti-pharisaism that had passed from Christ to Paul to Augustine to Luther to themselves. Against the strenuous, active faith of mainstream puritanism, they stressed the total passivity of the believer, providing us with a fourth indicator of the antinomian impulse. Each of the antinomian thinkers examined in this study maintained that no act of human effort or will could do anything to earn salvation or assurance, both of which were to come solely from the overwhelming power of Christ’s life and death (or, in certain formulations, through the inhabitation of Christ’s spirit in the believer’s soul). One and all, the figures examined below showed a marked tendency to emphasize the utter sinfulness and inability of naked human effort, while celebrating and emphasizing the raw and irresistible power of the divine will.

Curiously, however, even as they cried down the human will, arguing for the thoroughly abased, impotent, and empty nature of human selfhood, all antinomians likewise showed a paradoxical tendency to claim that believers in their post-conversion state were transformed into exalted (and on some accounts, supernatural) beings. While this exalted status was always assumed to flow from God, this fifth tendency nevertheless belied, or at least complicated, antinomian claims to be celebrating the sovereignty of God alone, as against neo-pharisaical mainstream puritans, who championed the power of man. So, too, it undermined their occasional claims to be merely promoting an unvarnished Protestantism, for their arguments concerning the status of regenerate believers were more extreme than anything seen among mainline reformed authorities.

Freedom from the Law was, of course, the most obvious aspect of the believer’s newly exalted status. So powerful was Christ’s sacrifice that it fulfilled and abolished, once and for all, the Law of Moses, at least for those who came to possess a true faith. Those who participated in the benefits of Christ’s righteousness and death were thus free from the Law and consequently from sin itself, at least in the sight of God. This tendency to pronounce believers in

some sense free from sin may be seen as a sixth shared characteristic.¹ Once again, it must be emphasized that the claim that believers were free from sin was intimately related to an attack on mainstream puritan piety: where godly preachers continually exhorted their listeners to scrutinize themselves for sin and to prostrate themselves in humble, sorrowful repentance for their lapses, antinomians argued that such tortured self-examination and continued hand-wringing betrayed a dead, legal professor, who had not yet experienced the glorious transformation and deliverance from sin that followed on God's grace in Christ. Against this "joylesse mourning"—this "pernitious carking care, that cuts the throate of all true Religion"—anti-legalists emphasized the exultant, liberatory, and joyful effects of divine grace, which was said to free the believer from fear and wrath.² Here, then, was a seventh, crucial characteristic of antinomian religiosity—the propensity to offer believers a sense of assurance and joy that was more total, more satisfying, and more final than anything to be found in mainstream puritanism.

It must be made absolutely clear at the outset, however, that freedom from sin did not equal freedom to sin. Despite the persistent charges of libertinism hurled at them by their opponents, all surviving early Stuart antinomian texts maintained that true believers would, in reality, obey God's will, despite the fact that they were free from the Law. Each and every figure examined in the course of this book argued that the faithful would do good works. Their good works, however, would be done not out of external compulsion, but by virtue of a new, internalized principle that flowed from true belief. It is this argument—pressed with special vehemence by each of the major antinomian propagandists—which, perhaps more than any other, set antinomians apart from their opponents, and defined them as a distinctive group in the world. Indeed, it may be said to have provided the underlying, emotional foundation for the more celebrated antinomian claim that believers were free from the Law: where pharisaical puritans obeyed out of fear and terror, carefully molding their lives to conform to the external rule of the Moral Law, true believers would obey God freely and joyfully without any extrinsic prompting at all. They needed no extrinsic, legal whip, for they possessed something within them that enabled them to do the things of God without fear of punishment or hope of reward. This intangible "something" was often taken to be Love, which was juxtaposed over and against the Law by a number of antinomian propagandists.

¹ Again, however, the reader should bear in mind that different antinomian spokesmen formulated this message in different ways.

² The quotation is drawn from John Trask, *The True Gospel Vindicated, From the Reproach of a New Gospel* (n.p., 1636), 38.

In its most extreme manifestations, however, this argument slipped easily into dangerously heterodox territory. For while some antinomian spokesmen contended that the internal principle guiding believers was simply a new disposition of love and thanksgiving, others pushed further, arguing that believers were enabled to obey without the Law because they were somehow inhabited by the Holy Spirit or by Christ himself. Such believers were often said to possess “the mind of Christ,” a crucial antinomian catchphrase. This represented the most radical expression of the antinomian tendency to exalt converted Christians, for on this view, true believers were rendered in some sense divine, even as they walked on earth. While this perspective was not universally accepted among those categorized in this book as antinomians, it was an argument canvassed often enough in antinomian circles that it merits comment at the outset.

Antinomianism thus set forth a message calculated to exploit the deepest fears, doubts and insecurities of godly lay people, to tap into dissatisfaction with the strenuous, unforgiving nature of mainstream puritan piety. Although this mainstream mode of piety seems to have proved sufficient for the large majority of godly people, there can be little question that for some men and women, the disciplines, demands, and general tenor of normative puritanism proved to be a passageway into despair and insecurity. For such people, as for those who may have resented the authoritarian claims of the traditional puritan ministry, antinomianism provided a ray of hope, a profoundly attractive alternative religiosity equally rooted in scripture, but—with its exalted claims about the effects of divine grace and the transcendent status of those who embraced the faith—eminently more assuring than its mainstream counterpart. It should be evident, moreover, that the antinomian critique achieved much of its polemical and rhetorical resonance by mobilizing some of the most emotionally powerful motifs of the protestant tradition—such as free grace and justification by faith alone—against the godly themselves. In their battle for the affections of the puritan laity, anti-legalists were thus able to promote themselves as the true heirs of Luther at a time when sensitivities over questions of works, grace, freewill, and predestination were growing steadily as a result of the prevalence of Arminianism in the church. Indeed, antinomianism emerged as a threatening trend within the godly community at the exact moment (1625-1630) that the controversies sparked by Richard Montagu reached their peak in press and parliament, and there are hints that antinomians themselves exploited the growing godly paranoia over Arminianism to undermine their mainstream puritan opponents.³ So, too, as we shall see be-

³ For Montagu and Arminianism, see N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; Revised paperback edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), *passim*. For hints that

low, mainstream puritans and Laudians would likewise attempt to exploit the emergence of antinomianism for their own short-term political gain. Thus, while the conflict over the Law was largely an intra-puritan battle to define the nature of godly life, this battle was conducted against the increasingly adversarial backdrop of the Caroline politico-ecclesiastical milieu.

Origins

Although joined together by a common aversion to the legalistic ways of conventional puritanism, different anti-legal teachers peddled subtly different varieties of antinomianism. These differences stemmed in part from the fact that some anti-legalists were more deeply imbued with heterodox (and particularly Familist) traditions than others. As a consequence, we can identify two basic but distinct types of antinomianism in early Stuart England. The first category, which has recently received insightful analysis at the hands of the literary scholar Nigel Smith, can be described as “perfectionist,” or “inherentist.”⁴ On this view, believers were held to be free from the Law and sin in that they had achieved an inherent perfection that rendered them actually pure in this life. Their freedom from the Law was a result of the fact that the Law was fulfilled within them. This perfection was assumed to flow from a believer’s participation in, or identity with, Jesus Christ.

This mode of antinomian thought owed much to the teachings of Hendrik Niclaes (alias HN), the messianic founder of the Family of Love. Thanks to Smith, Alastair Hamilton, Joan Dietz Moss, M. T. Pearce, and Christopher Marsh, our knowledge of Familist piety is now fairly extensive, requiring no systematic elaboration here.⁵ The basic components of this piety included a deeply allegorical mode of biblical interpretation, in which the literal narratives of scripture were taken to be figures for events and transformations that took place in the believer’s soul; a tendency to claim that believers had already been resurrected in this life (a tenet that was often taken by opponents to imply that Familists denied the literal resurrection of the body); and most emphatically, the belief that true believers had somehow merged with God him-

the antinomians themselves exploited the emergence of Arminianism against their mainstream puritan opponents, see below, Chapter Eleven.

⁴ Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 107-43, and passim.

⁵ Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 144-84; Alastair Hamilton, *The Family of Love* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1981); J. Dietz Moss, “*Godded with God*”: *Hendrik Niclaes and his Family of Love*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 71, Part 8 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981); M. T. Pearce, *Between Known Men and Visible Saints: A Study in Sixteenth-Century English Dissent* (Madison and Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994).

self—a belief captured most succinctly by the notorious formula that the faithful had been “Christed with Christ and Godded with God.” By virtue of their union with Christ, believers were returned to a state of prelapsarian perfection, and were thus, from one perspective, free from the Law and sin. Familism may thus be regarded as a species of antinomianism, generically considered.

Christopher Marsh has recently provided us with a brilliant and eye-opening study of the fortunes of HN’s “service of Love” in England.⁶ He suggests that despite promising Elizabethan beginnings, the English branch of the sect petered out in the early seventeenth century. While it is true that Familism in its original incarnation appears to have died quickly, the evidence of Creech, Howes, and other witnesses, such as the godly minister Thomas Shepard, demonstrates beyond question that HN’s writings, as well as other “neo-Familist” texts, continued to circulate among small groups of devotees.⁷ These sources were often complemented by other mystical or perfectionist works, the most important of which was the *Theologia Germanica*. This fourteenth century mystical treatise, first edited and published by Luther on the eve of the Reformation, had been central to the development of radical Protestantism, influencing figures such as Denck, Franck, Castellio, and very possibly, Hendrik Niclaes. As such, it had come to be regarded as a dangerous and poisonous work of heresy by later reformers, notwithstanding Luther’s warm affection for the work.⁸ Other crucial sources included *The Rule of Perfection*, a work of Catholic perfectionist mysticism mentioned by Creech and later published by Giles Randall, and the alchemical tradition, which to judge from surviving evidence, often went hand in hand with Familist forms of religiosity.⁹ Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the influence of these sources was often indirect. Even those rare men and women who continued to identify themselves as Familists maintained only a slender connection to the original sect, which had centered inordinately on the person of Hendrik Nic-

⁶ C. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), passim.

⁷ For Shepard, see below, Chapters Eight and Ten.

⁸ Steven E. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), 14-60. It is possible that Luther’s known enthusiasm for the book contributed to its acceptance amongst radical English Protestants, for as we shall see, Luther himself was venerated in antinomian circles.

⁹ For speculation on the connection between Familism and Rosicrucianism, see Hamilton, *Family*, 142-43. It may be surmised that Familism and alchemy traveled together for two reasons: first of all, they shared a deeply allegorical mode of expression and hermeneutics; secondly, both held out the hope of “Begoddedness” or human divinization.

laes. In most cases, Familist, perfectionist, or sectarian writings appear to have been read through the lenses of mainstream puritanism. This process will be examined in greater detail below; for now, it serves our turn to note that perfectionist mysticism was generally blended with more conventional godly influences to produce styles of divinity that were neither strictly Familist (in the sense outlined by Marsh) nor entirely removed from the puritan tradition. In this manner, sectarian ideas continued to exert a limited, but nonetheless tangible, influence throughout the early Stuart period. The resulting “perfectionist” strain of antinomianism shall be examined more fully in Chapters Seven and Eight, which focus respectively on John Everarde and Roger Brearley.

The second, distinct form of antinomianism can be roughly described as “imputative.” Imputative antinomians tended to argue that although humans remained sinful throughout their earthly lives, by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice, the faithful appeared before God as perfect, just and sinless. Proponents of this view held that believers were not inherently pure, but rather rendered “imputatively” perfect via the exogenous holiness of Christ. True Christians were “clothed in the garment of Christ’s perfect righteousness,” and as a consequence, God viewed them as perfectly holy, despite their sins. Such an argument came dangerously close to the standard reformed doctrine of Justification, in which the faithful were reckoned just before God by virtue of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. And in fact, this form of antinomianism appears to have developed as an outgrowth from, or an elaboration upon, orthodox protestant divinity, as filtered through an English puritan context. As suggested above, imputative antinomians sometimes asserted their protestant roots, larding their texts with citations from respectable reformed authorities in an effort to prove that they were teaching nothing other than untainted Christianity. Unlike “perfectionist” varieties of antinomianism, this mode of thought was generated from within the heart of early Stuart puritanism, and because it was quite independent of the teachings of Nicolaes, it did not necessarily bring with it the allegorical exuberances or “moralist” consequences that tended to go hand in hand with Familism. This explicitly “puritan” mode of antinomianism, which receives detailed treatment in Chapter Six, was in fact the more influential of the two strains.

These two basic categories can serve as a rough map to the intellectual poles of the antinomian underground. At one end stood genuine, self-identifying Familists, who carried with them many of the oddities of that tradition, including the doctrine of earthly perfection; at the other end, stood purely imputative antinomians, who are at times exceedingly difficult to differentiate from their mainstream puritan counterparts. Yet the reality of the situation was somewhat murkier, for most antinomians in fact fell somewhere between these two poles. Even “imputative” antinomians tended at times to discuss believers as if they were in themselves utterly perfect and free from sin.

Moreover, from the beginning, those interested in “imputative” antinomianism seem to have gravitated toward “perfectionist” ideas, and vice versa; the result was significant cross-fertilization of ideas and personnel, making it impossible to draw a hard-and-fast dichotomy between two distinct and unrelated subgroups. Chapter Nine examines some of the resulting “hybrid” forms of antinomianism, illuminating the process whereby the “imputative” and “perfectionist” strains crossed to produce new and in some cases, strikingly radical, permutations of anti-legal thought. Nevertheless, different anti-legal teachers emphasized one style or the other, ensuring that there were different flavors of antinomianism in England on the eve of the English civil wars.

This situation flowed from the fact that various antinomian sect-masters had come to their positions from one pole or the other. The following pages provide brief sketches of the careers of several of the central antinomian heresiarchs, in order both to orient the reader and to offer a sense of the tangled origins of the antinomian movement. Perhaps the most important of these figures was John Eaton, sometime vicar of Wickham Market, Suffolk. A Kentishman by birth, Eaton was educated at Trinity College, Oxford, where he took his B.A. in 1595 and his M.A. in 1603. Around 1604, he was presented to the living at Wickham Market, after which he appears to have developed his curious opinions. In 1614, Eaton came under attack for making the claim that God did not see sin in those who had been justified by faith.¹⁰ Eaton, the most famous and influential of prewar antinomians, seems to have arrived at his opinions through meditation on the reformed doctrine of justification. His theology, while virulently anti-legal, remained duly “imputative” throughout his stormy career—there are no hints of perfectionist or Familist influence in his thought. And it was Eaton’s theology, which he propagated through a series of letters and manuscripts, as well as through sermons and private meetings, that came in time to be recognized as the epitome of antinomianism. For this reason, Chapter Six focuses primarily on Eaton. After his initial brush with authority, Eaton managed to continue on at Wickham Market until 1619, when he was finally deprived by the High Commission.¹¹ Following this, he appears to have taken up residence in London, where he gathered a

¹⁰ See P. Gunter, *A Sermon Preached in the Countie of Suffolk, before the Clergie and Laytie, for the Discoverie and Confutation of Certaine Strange, Pernicious, and Hereticall Positions, Publickely Delivered, Held, and Maintayned, Touching Justification, by a Certaine Factious Preacher of Wickam Market* (1615), 14-15 and passim; Gunter’s sermon may have been a response to a sermon preached by Eaton at a clerical synod in Norwich in 1614, for which Eaton had been censured in the church courts (for this last piece of information, I am indebted to a personal correspondence from Kenneth Fincham).

¹¹ PRO, SPD 14/108/84.

notoriously large following during the 1620s, despite continued ecclesiastical surveillance.¹²

John Traske, meanwhile, appears to have approached an antinomian position quite independently, but almost simultaneously, possibly by merging or assimilating Familist doctrines with those of extreme puritanism.¹³ By 1615, he was publicly defending the notion that the elect were free from the commanding power of the Law, and from sin itself, although unlike Eaton, Traske appears to have argued that this freedom was a result of the fact that believers somehow possessed Christ's perfection. Between 1613 and 1615, Traske took up the mantle of an itinerant prophet, evangelizing in Devonshire, Somerset, the Isle of Ely, the London area, and possibly in Dorset. He and several of his followers finally fell afoul of the authorities in late 1617 because their perfectionism had led them into a peculiar Mosaic legalism, in which they pressed strict obedience to the Old Testament ceremonies, including Jewish dietary restrictions and observance of the Saturday Sabbath. Condemned for scandalizing the King and his subjects, Traske was tortured and imprisoned, only to renounce his "Judaizing" errors, and return as a full-blown antinomian—retaining his perfectionism, while rejecting his exacting legalism—in London in the 1620s. Here, perhaps unsurprisingly, he made contact with the circle surrounding Eaton, in a step that can only be regarded as critical in the transformation of antinomianism from a doctrinal curiosity maintained by a number of isolated individuals, to a self-conscious and ideologically unified movement. Chapter Five examines the early career and theology of John Traske and his followers, while Chapter Nine surveys the process whereby this theology mutated into a full-fledged antinomianism.

Meanwhile, at nearly the same time, a third important center of antinomianism opened up in the North, apparently independent of Eaton and Traske. In October 1616, Roger Brearley, the "minister at Grindleton" mentioned by Creech, was brought before the York High Commission to answer a set of articles, as well as a list of fifty erroneous propositions allegedly held by him and his followers along the Yorkshire-Lancashire border.¹⁴ These articles included charges of radical nonconformity, a profound tendency to rely on the

¹² For hints of Eaton's later troubles with the authorities, see the comments of Archbishop Abbot at the High Commission trial of John Eachard, transcribed in S. R. Gardiner, ed., *Reports of Cases in the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission*, Camden Society, N.S., 39 (1886), 320-21.

¹³ The possibility of Familist influence is considered below, Chapter Five, and in Appendix A.

¹⁴ The articles, which survive in two separate copies in the Bodleian Library, were first transcribed in Theodor Sippell, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Quäkertüms* (Giessen, Ger.: Alfred Töpelmann, 1920), 50-52. An amended transcription may be found in Appendix D, below.

motions of the spirit, as well as hints that believers were delivered from all doubt and insecurity as to their salvation. In the event, Brearley appears to have evaded punishment by renouncing his opinions and promising full future conformity, maneuvers that can only be described as disingenuous, for the so-called “Grindletonian” movement hardly dispersed in the wake of the trial. Chapter Eight chronicles the rise and growth of this movement, which appears to have gained a substantial following in both Lancashire and Yorkshire between 1615 and 1640. Swept up in the Grindletonian enthusiasm were a number of clergymen—Richard Tennant, William Boyes, William Aiglin, John Webster, Richard Coore, Peter Shaw, and two brothers, Robert and John Towne—whose efforts complemented Brearley’s and facilitated the spread of antinomian ideas in the North. From its epicenter in the remote moors of the Pennines, the Grindletonian community appears to have served as a kind of womb, nurturing figures crucial to the further spread of antinomianism throughout England, and serving as a kind of refuge for those who found themselves in trouble elsewhere. Thus, in 1629, when controversy exploded in London over antinomianism, at least two of the young ministers who found themselves at the eye of the storm, Peter Shaw and Robert Towne, appear to have hailed from the Grindletonian conventicles of the North; when each was chased from London, they returned to Lancashire, where Towne at least reestablished contact with the Grindletonian network, now centering on Brearley’s new parish of Burnley, Lancashire.

The intellectual origins of Grindletonianism are obscure. Hostile observers often accused the Grindletonians of Familism, but as suggested above, this was a term of abuse that was applied indiscriminately to refer to emerging anti-legal theological opinions. The account offered here suggests that Brearley and his followers very probably did read the works of HN, incorporating key Familist tropes into their message. Yet this by no means does justice to Brearley’s divinity. For perhaps even more important to his thought was that great fountainhead of early modern mysticism, the *Theologia Germanica*. It must be emphasized, however, that Brearley and his followers were much more than mystical spiritualists in the tradition of the sixteenth-century radical reformation. Instead, they read their mystical sources through the spectacles of militant puritanism in order to produce their own distinct and prophetic message. Defiantly protestant, the Grindletonians claimed the legacy of the reformation even as they advanced perfectionist ideas that were anathema to the mainstream reformed tradition.

Brearley and his followers probably harbored Familist texts and ideas alongside those drawn from the *Theologia*; others most certainly did. One such figure was the London layman John Etherington, who was convicted in late 1626 of being a Familist sect-master. Although he vehemently denied the charges, Etherington’s own published statements demonstrate that in the first

decade of the seventeenth century, he had indeed flirted with the ideas of HN, providing us with one of our few pieces of evidence regarding the survival of a self-conscious Familist community into the seventeenth century.¹⁵ By the 1620s, however, he had rejected the Family of Love, settling into a more complex doctrinal position that retained some vestiges of his early mysticism within a broader synthesis that (at least on Etherington's account) conformed entirely to the formularies of the Church of England.¹⁶ This synthesis included the tendency to spiritualize and allegorize the sacraments and the Sabbath, and to argue that the mainstream godly ministry generally propagated an overly legalistic and simplistic understanding of such spiritual mysteries. Although it is not clear whether his mature position included the claim that believers were free from the Moral Law, Etherington's criticism of puritan legalism places him close to thoroughgoing antinomians such as Eaton and Traske, and it was this anti-legal tendency that brought him into conflict with the godly ministers Stephen Denison and Henry Roborough, resulting in his prosecution before High Commission.

After 1640, Etherington published several pamphlets defending himself from Denison's accusations. In his efforts to prove his innocence, he pointed the finger at "others . . . that have taught the doctrine of H. N."¹⁷ One was the Lancashireman Peter Shaw, alluded to above. The other was Creech's alleged mentor, the arch-heretic Dr. John Everarde, who represents our final example of the independent development of antinomian ideas in early seventeenth century England. As we shall see below, Everarde was a voracious consumer of all things esoteric and heterodox, absorbing hermetic, alchemical, and mystical sources into a syncretic and eccentric whole. Unlike Eaton,

¹⁵ See John Etherington, *A Briefe Discovery of the Blasphemous Doctrine of Familisme* (1645), 10-11; Marsh, *Family of Love*, 239-41. An extensive treatment of Etherington's career and intellectual trajectory is found in P. Lake, *The Box-maker's Revenge: 'Orthodoxy,' 'Heterodoxy,' and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). Given Lake's thorough exploration, this study examines Etherington's career only insofar as it elucidates the wider ideological and cultural context of antinomianism. I would like to thank Peter Lake for sharing with me his many insights and discoveries concerning Etherington and Denison (as well as the elusive T.L.), and for allowing me to read his book at several stages of its development.

¹⁶ For an example of the manner in which Etherington adapted HN's ideas, long after he had ceased to consider himself in any way a member of the Family of Love, see below, Appendix A.

¹⁷ Etherington, *Brief Discovery*, 10. Etherington likewise named Dr. Robert Gell and Dr. John Pordage. As noted above, Edward Howes did indeed attend and copy out the sermons of Robert Gell in London during the 1640s. As demonstrated in this chapter, Pordage was dispensing unusual messages in London by 1633-34.

Traske, Brearley, and Etherington, Everarde was also graced with a powerful patron and protector, Henry Rich, the Earl of Holland, who as we have seen, was the recipient of one of Everarde's precious translations of the *Theologia Germanica*. In the 1630s, contemporaries described Everarde as Holland's "chaplain."¹⁸ It was almost certainly Holland's influence that secured for Everarde successive lectureships at the well-heeled West End parishes of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and Kensington, in addition to at least one rich benefice in Essex. Although repeatedly in trouble with the authorities, both for his incessant sermonizing against the Spanish Match and for his unusual doctrinal positions, Everarde managed to survive and preach throughout the 1620s and 1630s, probably as a result of the protection of the earl, as well as other influential friends, such as Edmund Sheffield, the Earl of Mulgrave.¹⁹ Only in 1639-40, less than two years before his death, did the authorities catch up with Everarde. Convicted in the court of High Commission, he was ordered to appear on his knees before the commissioners, and to confess and retract numerous errors, including the denial of the literal resurrection of the body.²⁰ Although modern scholars have expressed doubts as to whether Everarde actually read HN, his theology seems to have been suffused with hints of mortalism, a genuine and thoroughgoing perfectionism, and more generally with the Familist tendency to treat scriptural stories, events and characters as allegories for qualities or changes within the believer's soul. Whatever the source of his opinions, by 1626 Everarde was openly and brazenly dispensing perfectionist doctrine from his pulpit.

We thus see that "antinomianism" was a diverse phenomenon without a single point of origin. The fact that at least five distinct nodes of anti-legal opinion could develop concurrently in early Stuart England should probably not be taken to mean that the Family of Love had survived intact, spreading secretly but inexorably beneath the surface of English society. What it does suggest is that orthodox puritanism as it had emerged by the early seventeenth century was deeply susceptible to an antinomian critique, so susceptible in fact

¹⁸ Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers, MS. 29/2/12B, as cited from *The Hartlib Papers: A Complete Text and Image Database of the Papers of Samuel Hartlib (c.1600-1662) Held in Sheffield University Library*, 2d ed. (Sheffield: Humanities Research Online, 2002), where Everarde is described by Sir Francis Varnam as "Chaplain to my Lord of Holland at Fulham"; see also William Prynne, *Hidden Works of Darknes brought to Publike Light* (1645), 207 (mispaginated as 211).

¹⁹ For a detailed account of Everarde's career, including his many encounters with the authorities, see Paul R. Hunt, "John Everard: A Study of His Life, Thought, and Preaching" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1977).

²⁰ For details on Everarde's troubles in the 1630s, see below, Chapters Three and Seven.

that such a critique evolved not once but several times, under distinct contingent circumstances. In some cases, these anti-legal critics may have started down their theological paths through exposure to members of the Family of Love, which survived in vestigial pockets here and there. Such was not necessarily the case, however. As Laudian and Catholic polemicists frequently noted, orthodox puritanism, with its emphases on unmerited grace and absolute predestination, and its enthusiastic tendency to rely on the motions of the spirit, contained within it at least the germ of antinomianism; paradoxically, however, the rigors and preciseness of godly piety left puritans wide open to charges of legalism and works-righteousness, a charge echoed by each of the antinomian thinkers described above. Having arrived at a position of anti-legalism, a determined religious seeker might imbibe a variety of mystical, perfectionist, or Familist sources, which were secretively passed within small pockets of people who were united above all by a suspicion that orthodox puritanism, with its exacting disciplines and taskmasterly deity, had somehow missed the point of the Gospel. And by the late 1620s, they were united increasingly by geography, as an alarming number of antinomians gravitated toward London. Here, galvanized both by their mutual hostility toward mainstream puritanism, and by an inchoate, common anti-legal impulse, these various thinkers appear to have sought one another out to form what can only be termed a movement. Where previously there had been only disconnected cells of like-minded men and women, there now emerged an increasingly unified subculture.

APPENDIX B

Familist Extracts from the Diary of Edward Howes (British Library, Sloane MS. 979)

[fol. 18v] Col: 3. Love which is the bond of perfection.

Heb: 6. Let us goe forth unto the perfection.

Deut: 18. e thou shalt be perfect.

Joshuah 24. e serve him in perfectnes.

Math. 5 be perfect as your heavenly father

19. e if thou wilt be perfect

Luk 1. 8. to make ready a perfect people²²

6. and every man shalbe perfect

I Cor 2. 6 among them that are perfect.

14. d in will be perfect

2 Cor 13. be perfect.

Eph. 6. c stand perfect in all things.

Phil: 3. c.

Coll. 1. d.

2 Tim 3. d.

[19r] A loving Admonition sent from a Lover of the Truth, unto all goodwillings harts to God and his righteousness: for them to beware of some that are Deceived and would deceive (by seditious Libells and false doctrine) perswading men that it is not possible to attaine unto the perfection, or yet be delivered from the subjection to Sinne, in this life, while men walke on Earth.

Thus saith Christ, whoe soe confesseth me before men, him will I alsoe confesse before my heavenly father and the Angells of God, and whoe soe denyeth me before men, him will I alsoe denye before the Angells of God. Luk. 12.

ffirst note these 2 principall poynts, wheresoever thou readest in holie scriptures of this word PERFECTION then consider [19v] the same is only to be understood of CHRIST JESUS./

2. And wheresoever thou readest of repentance, forsakinge, mortifienge, or subduing of sinne, that cometh to passe by the grace of God the father (which hath

²² Note that this and some of the other scriptural verses appear to have been mis-cited.

called us thereunto in the obedience of his word) and the free pardoning and taking away of our Sinns that is only wrought (through Christ the perfection) in those that have attained to the said PERFECTION./

And sith it hath pleased the father that in him should all fulnes dwell Col: 1. Therefore let us first submitt to his holy lawe, to the mortifieng of our sinfull lusts and desires, wayting for the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, whoe (being once fashioned and obtayninge a livinge shape or [20r] forme in us in the spirit soe that we may dwell in him and he in us) is at that tyme our PERFECTION, our righteousnes our Ellection, our Redemption; our justification and salvation, which after all our beleife Hope and longinge remaineth and standeth sure./2 Cor: 13. a. Joh: 15. 6. 1. Cor: 3 Col: 3. c. 1 Tim: 1. 6. 2 Pet: 2. d. Joh: 2. a. 2 Cor: 1. d. 5.d. gal: 2. d. phil: 3. b: c: d/for God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared to us (in the service of his Christ) and teacheth us that we should denye ungodlynes and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearinge of the glorie of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ. wch gave himselfe for us, to redeeme us from all sinne and unrighteousnes and to purge us, for a peculiar people unto himself, being fervently inclyned unto good works./

[20v] Therefore let us continue in the wholesome doctrine which we have learned, and presse forth unto the perfection, or marke appoynted, which hath bin alsoe taught us out of the holy scripture by all godlie learned.

And this perfection (in whomesoever it dwelleth) is Christ Jesus, as is afforesaid. And soe many then as are without him, or his spirit, those are none of his, and are but cast awayes, and a heape of misbelievers or uncircumcised heathen.

But over all those that are of the household of God, all good willing obedient and faithful ones (in whome Christ, the perfection of all the worke of God dwelleth and liveth) the remission and cleane taking away of sinns standeth fast promised for ever: if they doe hartilie repent of their former sinfull life [21r] and doe exercise themselves in that which is right and reasonable, taking up alsoe their Crosse daylie on them, and soe imitate Christ (their righteousnes and perfection) in death and life, to the renewing of their spirits and minds in him, which taketh away their sinnes, and the sinnes of all that beleive, and fastneth all that is against them in the Lawe unto his crosse. For they have noe pleasure in sinne, and therefore are not their infirmities (wherewith they are often tymes over taken), accompted any more for sinne unto them, but are cleane put out of remembrance, (and pardoned in Christ) and shall never more be thought upon e[t]c for love covereth them all. And for that cause they are alwayes enemies to sinne, as strive daylie (in a firme beleife) to the subdueing of sinne. Rom: 6.

[21v] And that sinne is the only thinge which God hateth, and hath alwayes forbidden, and is it which hath separated man from his God, as also the cause of

Curse, death and Condemnation ov[e]r all those that take pleasure therein./Rom: 5. 6/Jam: 4. 6./1 Joh: 2. e./1 John: 1. d.

ffinally this is according to the gossell of Jesus Christ, that we in true repentance through his grace, and in the obedience of his comand, should be nourtered to the resisting and mortifyeng of the sinfull lusts and desires, untill Christ come and dwell in us by faith with out whome there is noe remission of sinnes./

But such as desire not to walke in this narrow waye, and in whome this perfection is not, nor that have any desire thereunto. They are such as deny Christ to be come in the flesh 1. Joh: 4. and therefore very ANTICHRISTS, HERETICKS, ATHEISTS, LIBERTINES, and (if they continue therein) not better then castawayes. 2. Cor: 13. d.

[22r] Cantica prima

To Complaine over the evill and to pray unto God.

1 O Lord my God awake to me
Unstop thyne holie eares
my humble harte I turne to the
harke to my plaint and teares

2 The burthen of my wicked deeds
doth make my harte fall out of ease
I must declare the greife it breeds
O Lord, if that it may thee please.

3 But turne to me thy gracious eye
behold my sore and grevous case
let not the sinne lead me awrye
enlarge 'ore me thy heavenly grace,

4 O Lord behold my sorrow and paine
together with my heavienes
thy comfort let me now obtaine
in this my greife and great distresse.

5. The evill hath my harts lusts caught
and brought me into miserie sore,
[22v] O lord for thy deliverance
I longe deferre it not noe more,

6. O Purge and purifie my harte
thy holy spirit of life give me
for evill bringeth me great smarte
And hath not wherewith to releive me

7. In lastinge good would I could live
then should my soule have present rest

but sinne doth cleave to me soe fast
to crave thyne aide o lord, I am prest.

8. O let me not goe to decaye
nor perish with the wicked wight
Thy love let me enjoye then may
I stand before the in thy sight

9 To walke in thy free paths and wayes
O lord in earnest I desire.
nought then should harme me any wayes
but all would to my gaine conspire.

[23r] 10 Good God, thy mercie shew on me
and alwayes in thy paths me guide
Embrace me in thyne armes lamely [?]
or I shall never be satisfied./

21 Cantica:

Gods light will hidd noe longer be,
but riseth bright most cleare to see
and; from within; doth lighten such
whose harts Gods love doe favor much
for god in us hath soe expressed
the livers in Love are surely blessed,

Apparently now doth Gods light
stand; livingly, soe firme and bright
in that most blessed house of Love
whence none shall it from thence remove
for God in us hath soe expressed
the livers in love are surely blessed.

[23v] Come all ye people high and lowe
and to the house of love lets goe
for therein may we have true light
Elsewhere the day is darke as night
for God in us hath soe expressed
the livers in love are only blessed.

Consider in tyme whoe is your head
you that would live but are yet dead
What is it that true life imparts
but Gods love livinge in your harts./

For God in us etc.

For without Love tis a plaine case Darknes over all doth take the place

All sorts of evill deeds and words Consider now who are your lords
For God etc.

In Darknes the Divell is head, they more and more in error love
they which despise the Love of God, shall dyeing taste the deadly rodd
For God in us etc.

God only is the lovinge love, which liveth in us that Lovely prove
let us agree to advance him high whose love is greatest majestic
For God in us. etc.

Where envie malice wrath and rage
and lust not love shall be their page,
which thousands prove in every age.
Now leave your follies and outrage.²³

²³ Compare against the very different translation from HN, *Cantica. Certen of the Songes of HN* (n. p., 1574?), sigs. A2r-v, A4r-v.