Spiritual Warfare: A Survey
of Puritan Practical Divinity[1]

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In the sizeable spiritual tome of the English Puritan John Downame (1571–1652), *The Christian Warfare*, the author addressed the reality of spiritual warfare in the life of believers:

> As soone as we seeke for assurance of saluation in Christ, and endeauour to serue the Lord in a holy and Christian life, wee are to prepare our selues for a combat, vnlesse we would suddenly be surprised. For the spirituall enemies of our saluation bandie themselues against vs as soone as we haue giuen our names vnto God, and taken vpon vs the profession and practice of Christianitie.[2]

Downame posited that spiritual warfare commenced at the beginning of the Christian life. Satan and the world were introduced as enemies. These cooperating adversaries appeared to use two tactics. They engaged themselves as spiritual seducers, but also as ferocious opponents. In both cases, their objective was to draw believers away from the pathway of faith. Downame then proceeded to address in detail the tactics of these enemies, as well as the believer's need to resist.

This article will focus on a theme that was addressed frequently in the spiritual writings of the Puritans: spiritual warfare.[3] Although they focused primarily on the inner dimension of the Christian's spiritual warfare, they also addressed external aspects of the life of faith. This article intends to furnish insights as to how spiritual warfare fit within the context of Puritan

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1. For the question of the definition of Puritanism, the study of Randall J. Pederson is now an indispensable resource. *Unity in Diversity: English puritans and the puritan Reformation, 1603–1689* (Leiden, Brill, 2014).

2. John Downame, *The Christian Warfare* (London: William Stansby, 1634), 1.

3. David D. Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 121.

spirituality, the pastoral counsel proposed to Christian warriors, and the early modern English social context in which they lived.

Puritan literature regarding spiritual warfare could be identified as a form of theology that belonged to the category of "practical divinity." A substantial quantity of Puritan works published during the final quarter of the sixteenth century and well into the seventeenth century covered practical divinity. They addressed matters of faith, piety, and other more practical aspects of the Christian life. They aimed at providing a broad readership with spiritual counsel by way of instruction and personal application.[4]

This article presents a broad, representative selection of Puritan publications on Christian warfare. It will endeavor to give insight into both the overall Puritan presentation of spiritual warfare, as well as the distinctive characteristics of each author. This article does not intend to cover the field of research beyond the presented resources, but restricts itself to English Puritan writings, and therefore bypasses the contribution of New England authors. It will focus on the following Puritan publications: William Perkins's: *Of the Combate of the Flesh and Spirit*, (1593), *The Combate Betweene Christ and the Devill Displayed: or, A Commentarie Vpon the Temptations of Christ* (1604); William Gouge's: *The Whole-Armor of God* (1619); John Downame's: *The Christian Warfare* (1604–1634); Thomas Brooks's: *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (1652); William Gurnall's: *The Christian in Complete Armour* (1655–1662); John Owen's: *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers* (1656), *Of Temptation: The Nature and Power of it* (1658), *The Nature, Power, Deceit and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers* (1667), *Pneumatologia: or, A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit* (1674); Isaac Ambrose's: *War with Devils* (1661); Richard Gilpin's: *Daemonologia Sacra: or, A Treatise of Satan's Temptations* (1677); and John Bunyan's: *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), *The Holy War* (1682), and *The Pilgrim's Progress, The Second Part* (1684).[5]

Perkins, the "father of Puritanism," presented several elements, which would become characteristic of Puritan views of spiritual warfare. His discussion of Christ's temptation in the desert (Matt. 4:1–11) depicted the devil as the primary opponent of the faithful, who tried to tempt them to

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4. For an overview of important themes: Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 116–64; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), *passim*.

5. An analysis of these writings is given by R. W. de Koeijer, *Geestelijke strijd bij de puriteinen. Een spiritualiteit-historisch onderzoek naar Engelse puriteinse geschriften in de periode 1587–1684* (Apeldoorn: De Banier, 2010).

both sin and spiritual despair. Just as Christ effectively parried His opponent with words from Scripture, so the Christian soldier was summoned to follow this example. Downame is chosen for having published the most voluminous volume about spiritual warfare in Puritan circles during a lifetime of about thirty years, a work in which he not only focused on diabolic but also on worldly temptations. Gouge and Gurnall focused on Ephesians 6, a central scriptural passage in Puritan works on spiritual warfare, from which they emphasized the responsibility of battling believers. Brooks is prominent for having written the most popular volume on the theme of this article, handling spiritual warfare in a pointed, expressive, realistic, and vivid way, while Ambrose had an approach of his own, extending Satan's activity to the entire human life. Owen believed spiritual warfare was the psychological fight against the believer's own sinful desires. In an in-depth anthropological-psychological analysis of believers, Owen described both the active power of sinful desires in believers and the spiritual resistance to which they are called. Gilpin and Bunyan are included because they magnified Satan's power, as they dramatized the role of spiritual despair to haunting effect, but Gilpin's medical background and Bunyan's literary imagination seemed to have led them to this emphasis. Moreover, in Bunyan's presentation of worldly temptations, the experience of Restoration persecution loomed largely.

Methodology and State of Research

To evaluate the significance of the Puritan literature regarding spiritual warfare, this article will discuss its multi-faceted context. First, this literature frequently had its origin in sermons addressed to the congregation. A focus on published sermons means that this article does not analyze the personal reaction of church members to the Puritan message about spiritual warfare, but instead concentrates on the message itself.[6] Nevertheless, research of the literary text must be viewed in connection with the ecclesiastical-pastoral situation: these Puritan writings about practical theology emerged within the context of the post-Reformation Church of England with its great diversity of members. Second, this literature was written within the theological context of a Reformed emphasis on pneumatology and the *ordo salutis*. Third, Puritan views of spiritual warfare must

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6. On the primary importance that religious ideas be searched out as clearly as possible, see Leif Dixon, *Practical Predestinarians in England, c.1590–1640* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2014), 7–8.

also be placed within the context of its spirituality, in which union and communion with the triune God went hand in hand with an awareness of the dangers that confronted the Christian life—particularly temptation, sin, and despair. Puritan preachers and spiritual writers increasingly focused on the significant role of experience within the context of pastoral guidance and the maturation of spiritual life. Included within the emotional context of Christian experience were also "dark" experiences, such as affliction, desertion, and despair. The latter were an essential component of Puritan writings on spiritual warfare.[7] Fourth, knowledge of the social and cultural context is significant, for considering the unique and conflicted position of Puritanism within the English post-Reformation society will guide in a proper evaluation of the polemical pronouncements regarding the Roman Catholic Church, fellow citizens, or English society.[8]

The views of individual Puritans regarding spiritual warfare were occasionally researched.[9] Frank Luttmer discussed the Puritan approach to spiritual warfare within the context of the relationship between Puritan saints and their fellow citizens. Puritans viewed the majority of their fellow citizens as unconverted, and therefore as instruments of the devil. By their worldly lifestyle, they could potentially seduce their Puritan compatriots to sin and even oppose them. However, there was usually not an intense

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7. Reinier W. de Koeijer, "Puritans and Spiritual Desertion: The Progressive Development of Puritan Pastoral Psychology," *Journal for the History of Reformed Pietism* 1 (Fall 2015): 1–33. In light of current research, the discussion of warfare as a component of Puritan spirituality aims to contribute to a growing interest in the significance of spiritual emotions within early modern European culture and spirituality, as well as within Reformed Protestantism. See Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 17–95; Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda, eds., *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), *passim*.

8. For an analysis of this context, see De Koeijer, *Geestelijke strijd bij de puriteinen*, chap. 8.

9. Brian G. Zacharias, *The Embattled Christian: William Gurnall and the Puritan View of Spiritual Warfare* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995); Randall C. Gleason, *John Owen and John Calvin on Mortification: A Comparative Study in Reformed Spirituality* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 79–147; Steve M. Griffiths, *Redeem the Time: Sin in the Writings of John Owen* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 195–224; Eric Riviera, *Christ is Yours: The Assurance of Salvation in the Puritan Theology of William Gouge* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2019), 72–109; Cory Higdon, "The Spirituality of William Gurnall: The Devil's Threat to Puritan Piety," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 11 (Fall 2019): 109–26. In his thematic approach, Zacharias combined quotes from Gurnall with those of other Puritan authors, while Gleason and Griffiths showed that Owen placed considerable emphasis on the spiritual battle against sin. Riviera's research regarded the relation between spiritual battle and the assurance of salvation in Gouge's view, while Higdon posited that Gurnall's analysis of spiritual warfare intensified his piety by stimulating zeal and passion for holiness.

manifestation of the latter, for it proved to be possible that, despite a profoundly different world view, they could coexist peacefully.[10]

Nathan Johnstone produced the most thorough study of the Puritan approach to spiritual warfare. He analyzed the depiction of Satan in the religious, literary, and political culture of early modern England.[11] The significance of Johnstone's research was that he identified the elements of the assessment of spiritual warfare in English Protestantism. The devil was the primary adversary; temptation was the all-encompassing focal point of his activity; and the knowledge of faith, insight into his tactics, and prayer were the core elements of a spiritual counteroffensive to these attacks. Furthermore, he accurately defined the context of the Protestant view regarding the devil and spiritual warfare by analyzing the pervasive anti-Catholicism and political tension of the English culture. Nevertheless, spiritual warfare was only addressed from the vantage point of resisting Satan, whereas the relationship to fellow citizens and sinful desires was not considered.

However, this study demands further research. For the unique dimension of Puritan writers regarding spiritual warfare was not sufficiently highlighted. Therefore, Puritan views on spiritual warfare must be articulated more clearly by way of the aforementioned selection of representative literature. In light of the extensive corpus of literature, it was precisely the Puritan movement that formulated and thoroughly discussed the subject of spiritual warfare in Protestant circles.

Three Enemies

The three enemies repeatedly encountered in Puritan literature will now be discussed individually: Satan, the world, and the flesh. In their pastoral guidance of Christian believers, Puritan authors linked temptations to both sin and despair to Satan, the arch-enemy of God. They did so specifically by seriously examining the biblical passages of Christ's temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4) and Paul's exhortation to ward off demonic attacks with the spiritual armour of Ephesians 6. Puritan writers highlighted the intimate connection between Satan and the world, because the world functioned as an important medium by which Satan was able to subject believers not only to a variety of temptations to sin, but also to opposition

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10. Frank Luttmer, "Persecutors, Tempters and Vassals of the Devil: The Unregenerate in Puritan Practical Divinity," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51 (January 2000): 37–68.

11. Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 60–142.

and even persecution from fellow-citizens and governments. Their view of the Christian was that of a pilgrim, who was traveling through a dangerous world, and was a stranger in conformity to the biblical description of believers in Hebrews 11.[12] Puritan authors considered the third enemy, the flesh, an evil power within the believer himself. This enemy operated according to the believer's own hidden desires, but also in cooperation with Satan, making his temptations all the more dangerous. The inner struggle of Paul in Romans 7:13–25 served as an important biblical illustration of spiritual warfare against the flesh.

Satan

Modern historical research regarding the place and significance of the devil and demons in pre-modern England focused almost exclusively on witchcraft.[13] At the same time, research also has revealed that the role of the devil permeated a considerable segment of the pre-modern English biblical culture. Particularly in Puritan literature, several decidedly different aspects were accentuated other than the physical manifestation of the devil in stories about witchcraft.[14]

Previous research primarily articulated the functional aspect of the Puritan focus on demonology. By way of psychological projection, the devil was presented as a symbol of guilt or unrecognized, hidden desires.[15] Furthermore, this focus on the devil in Puritan literature was associated with the self-assessment of believers in their relationship with unregenerate fellow citizens. The unregenerate were viewed as Satan's willing subjects, whereas the community of the godly continually engaged in battle with the

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12. Neil Keeble, "To be a Pilgrim: Constructing the Protestant Life in Early Modern England," in Colin Morris, ed., *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 238–56; Hall, *The Puritans*, 121.

13. The two most significant studies are Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971); Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). In this context, writings on demonic possession and examples of Protestant exorcism are also worth mentioning. For a history, see, Brian P. Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). However, demonic possession has received considerably less scholarly attention than the demonic side of witchcraft.

14. Johnstone, *Devil and Demonism*, 60–142.

15. Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early Modern New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 93–106.

tempter.[16] The development of Puritan belief in the devil emerged from the disappointment that a comprehensive reformation of the English nation had not occurred. This belief fostered an antithetical world view which identified believers as a minority besieged by the opponents of reformation under the leadership of Satan.[17]

The advantage of this assessment of English belief in the devil was that satanic activities were placed within a flexible context of individual and collective needs. The disadvantage was that the focus on Satan was primarily explained by a projection of primarily negative experiences of opposition, disappointment, and vulnerability. Puritan literature discussed Satan, however, as a real adversary in the daily experience of believers. Although this literature posited an intimate connection between the sinful desires of believers and Satan, it did not do so at the expense of their responsibility for their sin. Moreover, Puritan literature on spiritual warfare did not view Satan's activity in the daily life of believers as determined by their relationship with the unregenerate or as dependent upon this. Instead, it emphasized the experience of demonic temptation within their hearts. Moreover, their striving for reformation could not be reduced to an exclusive thinking in terms of enmity. Their emphasis on the hidden activity of the devil within the church and society was not preeminent due to a supposed spiritual insensibility of a substantial part of the population. It was the rather "positive" experience of the presence of intelligent and pious fellow citizens finding satisfaction in Roman Catholic devotional practices that stimulated the Protestant accent on the satanic deception of these pious Roman Catholics.[18]

Although English Reformation divines adopted traditional notions of demonology from the medieval Catholic Church, they also shifted this previous emphasis. The late medieval view of the devil was that temptation was only one of the activities whereby Satan torments humanity.[19] However, English Protestant theologians and preachers shifted their emphasis and held that internal temptation was the primary and most dangerous component of Satan's activity. Internal temptation originated with the devil and was broadly connected to specific historical segments of humanity,

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16. Luttmer, "Persecutors."

17. Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 35–47.

18. Johnstone, *Devil and Demonism*, 12–26.

19. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 313–27.

opinions, and practices: the Roman Catholic Church's erroneous beliefs and devotional practices; forms of entertainment such as theater, dancing, corrupt literature, and playacting; individuals and communities that were potentially dangerous for the well-being of society; and the governmental structures of the state.[20]

Puritan preachers focused primarily upon the individual soul. The fact that their congregants were tempted to sin and experienced spiritual despair served as proof of demonic intrigue. In their spiritual literature, they described in detail the impact of the devil's activity upon the individual soul so that, in the role of helpers in this spiritual conflict, these pastoral guides could provide their believing readers with direction on how they could most effectively confront the adversary. Demonic activities were thus incorporated as a component of a broader construct of daily strife.

Satan's Character

Puritan authors did not extensively address Satan's origin and his relationship to the world of angels and demons. Instead, they were far more interested in the effect of demonic activity upon people, and primarily upon believers.

Their indifference toward Satan's background was particularly evident in John Downame's exhaustive work on spiritual warfare. The only point he addressed in extensive detail in his work was the power of the devil. He linked this with his spiritual identity—as one belonging to the angelic world—and having dominion over a legion of demons. However, this power was not abstract. Rather, he highlighted certain aspects of Satan's character that had deep significance for the Christian life: his malice, and particularly his deceitfulness.[21] His malice demonstrated his desire to destroy the believer. His deceit, however, explained how he aimed to achieve the believer's destruction. His deceit expressed itself by not always being personally engaged. Instead, he generally engaged the believer through his collaborators, the world and the flesh, both of which were highlighted extensively by Downame. Whenever the devil engaged himself as

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20. Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), *passim*; Jeremy Goring, *Godly Exercises or the Devil's Dance? Puritanism and Popular Culture in Pre-Civil War England* (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1983), *passim*; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 1–187, 335–483.

21. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 9, 42–43.

the accuser, his wickedness and the accompanying destructive intentions became all the more obvious.[22]

Season of Satan's Activities

Although Puritan authors discussed Satan's activity primarily as a component of warfare in the Christian life, devilish intrigues could also manifest themselves at the very beginning of conversion.

For example, Isaac Ambrose's emphasis in *War with Devils* was that the entire life of man was impacted by devilish activities—from the time of birth till the end of life. Thereby he indicated that this chief enemy stalked man throughout his life. He showed how Satan continually attempted to prevent a believer from surrendering to Christ, especially at the time of conversion when the conviction of guilt produced fear of God's wrath. Whereas the Spirit intermingled this fear with hope and used it constructively to stimulate in sinners a yearning for God's saving grace, Ambrose argued that Satan-inspired fear contained the eternal perdition of sinners as its main object. The devil sought to achieve his destructive objective by exaggerating the magnitude of various sins so that the scathing wrath of God became an inescapable consequence.[23]

Ambrose showed that man by nature lived in bondage to God's adversary, and that conversion culminated in being set free in principle from his dominant sphere of influence. This deliverance did not imply, however, that these devilish activities would cease in the life of the Christian following conversion.

Satan's Methodology

Puritans held that Satan's favorite method was to seduce believers to commit all manner of sin.

Thomas Brooks dealt extensively with this satanic temptation by practically and descriptively highlighting how the devil went to great lengths to highlight the attractiveness of sin while simultaneously concealing the truth

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22. For the Puritan presentation of satanic deception as a disguising of evil as good and of falsehood as truth, see David Parry, "As an Angel of Light: Satanic Rhetoric in Early Modern Literature and Theology," in Gregor Thuswaldner and Daniel Russ, eds., *The Hermeneutics of Hell: Vision and Representation of the Devil in World Literature* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 54–59. See also his forthcoming *The Rhetoric of Conversion in English Puritan Writing from Perkins to Milton*.

23. Isaac Ambrose, *The Compleat Works of Isaac Ambrose* (London: Rowland Reynolds, 1674), 33.

regarding God's temporal punishments and eternal wrath. Brooks called this Satan's "presenting the bait and hiding the hook." Brooks argued that Satan's scheme was to minimize little missteps. However, for Brooks sinning was unmistakably a cumulative activity. Evil generally originated in the mind and would finally and concretely impact the entire walk of life.[24]

Satan's role as accuser also belonged to the sphere of his seductive activities, revealing the true nature of his evil intentions. The devil would come with his accusation when the Christian warrior had yielded to sin in his heart, or when he committed a misdeed. His goal would then be to bring the believer to spiritual despondency and despair so that thereby he might bring about his demise.

William Perkins addressed Satan's role as the accuser in his book about Christ's temptation in the wilderness, *The Combate Betweene Christ and the Devill Displayed*. There Perkins highlighted the fact that in his first temptation Satan challenged the divinity of Christ. Perkins then applied this temptation of Christ to the believer, highlighting how the devil would also challenge the believer's spiritual identity as a child of God in order to lead him to despair.[25]

Downame addressed this too by clustering the direct temptations of Satan around the *ordo salutis*, particularly referencing the links between eternal election, calling, and sanctification. Downame argued that Satan targeted believers who were weak and prone to despondency by seeking to persuade them that their failings of heart and practice excluded them from God's eternal election. When the devil challenged the genuineness of one's faith, Downame directed Christians to the promises of the gospel, and the corresponding faith in these promises. Downame then proceeded to explain the internal and external marks of authentic faith. When a believer had yielded to sin, Satan would abuse this by magnifying sin and minimizing grace, thereby robbing the believer of any hope that he might be pardoned.[26]

Satan's Assault on God's Character
Brooks pointed out that when the devil tempted a believer to sin and despair, it was ultimately a proper view of God's character that was at issue.

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24. Thomas Brooks, *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861–1867), I:12–13, 19–21.

25. William Perkins, *The Workes of William Perkins*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: John Leggatt, 1612–1613), III:381–82.

26. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 104, 123–24, 300ff.

He argued that Satan would entice a believer to sin by slyly tempting him to dismiss it as harmless by pointing to God's great mercy. As Brooks related:

> Oh! Saith Satan, you need not make such a matter of sin, you need not be so fearful of sin, not so unwilling to sin; for God is a God of mercy, a God full of mercy, a God that delights in mercy, a God that is ready to shew mercy, a God that is never weary of shewing mercy, a God more prone to pardon his people than to punish his people; and therefore he will not take advantage against the soul; and why then, saith Satan, should you make such a matter of sin?[27]

Once sin had taken its full effect, however, the adversary would confront the believer with the exact opposite, namely, God's wrath and justice, and would seek to prevent him from being contrite and repentant, robbing him of the hope of forgiveness and thereby leading him to despair.[28]

Brooks posited that in both cases there was a distorted and erroneous presentation of God's character that would cause the Christian to be either superficially confident or despondent. Furthermore, he stated that God's justice and punishment of sin powerfully motivated the believer to curb evil. God's mercy guaranteed forgiveness and prevented the weak Christian from yielding to despondency and despair.

Satan's Power

Puritans highlighted how Satan used immediate mental insinuations in tempting the believer. Ambrose elevated the impact of devilish temptations, thereby depicting the dramatic nature of spiritual warfare.[29]

In his *Daemonologia Sacra*, Richard Gilpin affirmed Satan's power by his extensive and detailed description of Satan's influence upon the human heart via the senses, as well as through the strong connection he established between satanic intrigues and the mental condition of believers. Gilpin described the devil's impact on human imagination, which played a significant role in the commission of sin:

> When he propounds an object to our lust, he doth not usually expose it naked under the hazard of dying out for want of prosecution, but

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27. Brooks, *Works of Thomas Brooks*, I:27.
28. Brooks, *Works of Thomas Brooks*, I:37–38.
29. Ambrose, *Compleat Works of Isaac Ambrose*, 86.

presently calls in our fancy to his aid, and there raiseth a theatre, on which he acts before our minds the sin in all its ways and postures.[30]

According to Gilpin, human imagination was thus capable of stimulating sin, and through the senses, could have a more powerful effect on the mind than rational arguments. Since the affections persuaded the mind of the "pleasures of sin," their role was significant.

As he analyzed the devil's influence, Gilpin indicated that Satan could exercise considerable psychological influence, particularly when the believer was in a state of melancholy.[31] In his autobiography, *Grace Abounding*, John Bunyan argued that Satan was capable of frequently bringing the author to the brink of spiritual despair. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, while the confrontation with Apollyon was depicted as a battle of life and death, the events in the Valley of the Shadow of Death produced great fear in Christian, and Giant Despair proved to be an intimidating adversary. In *The Holy War*, Diabolus was an imposing figure who threatened and opposed Mansoul.[32]

Weak Christians
The spiritual category of weak Christians was frequently depicted in the researched literature. Satanic activities appeared to impact them more than was true for other Christian soldiers.

In the preface of *The Christian Warfare*, Downame wrote that he especially wished to encourage "weak Christians" in their spiritual warfare. He argued that such believers were particularly vulnerable to denying that they were indeed partakers of redemption due to Satanic taunts that would magnify their sins. They evidently could not counter this sufficiently and would, therefore, be vulnerable to despair.

Gilpin deemed vulnerable Christians to be particular individuals who struggled with melancholy (depression)—a spiritual mindset that offered the devil an ideal angle of attack. Troubling external circumstances and anxious thoughts could cause every Christian to lose his spiritual equilibrium and cause him to yield to unchristian thoughts and deeds. However,

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30. Richard Gilpin, *Daemonologia Sacra*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London: James Nisbet, 1867), 66.

31. Gilpin, *Daemonologia Sacra*, 209–18.

32. John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), *passim*; John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, eds. James Blanton Wharey and Roger Sharrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 59–60, 62–64, 113–14, 117; John Bunyan, *The Holy War*, eds. Roger Sharrock and James F. Forrest (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 13–17, 186–222.

for believers who had a melancholy disposition such circumstances would progressively degenerate to a much deeper (and therefore more perilous) assault—an assault that would focus primarily on the new birth and would render the soul's relationship with God vulnerable to becoming entirely dysfunctional. Satan would then proceed to avail himself deviously of this melancholy disposition to lead them to the abyss of spiritual disarray.[33]

It is necessary to understand the perceived identity of these vulnerable believers. Irrespective of age or spiritual maturity, a rather common condition could be addressed here that appeared to foster spiritual despair caused by being confronted with guilt, habitual sins, and a perceived experiential lack of God's nearness. This could particularly be true for young believers who, after their initial conversion, were vulnerable to Satan's devices. The latter view would tend to link the category of weak Christians to a specific stage of life and measure of spiritual development, rather than defining their weakness as an existential component. Though such a connection occasionally surfaced, Puritan authors usually linked the difference between strong and weak Christians to their spiritual disposition.

The World

Puritan publications on spiritual warfare presented the world as Satan's primary and most prominent accomplice. The world's role in this warfare will be assessed in light of the relationship between the Puritans and the context of English society.

Various scholars have arrived at an ambivalent conclusion regarding the place of Puritanism within the wider society. When viewed within the political and social context, the Puritan movement was predominantly moderate. Within the context of the national church, Puritans strove for the ongoing reformation of cities and villages, lived relatively harmoniously with their fellow citizens, and sought to counter trends that were critical of the orthodox Protestant faith.[34] However, research also has affirmed that these "hotter sort of Protestants" would generate some tension, foster polarization, and pose a potential threat to the peaceful coexistence of

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33. Gilpin, *Daemonologia Sacra*, 369.

34. Patrick Collinson, *Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), *passim*; Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1983), 1–19. Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 322.

various segments of the English population by separating themselves from their fellow citizens and being critical of various traditional practices.[35]

Therefore, the presence of citizens who were of Puritan persuasion periodically generated discussions, tensions, and conflicts in English society. When Puritan spiritual separation was combined with forms of participation in the social network of rural and metropolitan communities—which in some regions included governmental responsibilities—there would generally be societal toleration and relatively harmonious coexistence. However, if spiritual separation resulted in societal isolation, and if that were to include being sharply critical of the traditional customs of the community, internal tension also could emerge. The latter occurred in a particular way following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, when Puritans found themselves largely excluded from the English national church and socially degraded to an insignificant religious subculture.[36]

The social contrast between Puritans and non-Puritans was primarily based on their divergent theological-spiritual premises. Puritan preachers made a sharp distinction between Christians who had experienced a spiritual new birth and others who did not have the same experience. Whereas the first category had found spiritual freedom, the other group was under the dominion of Satan and sinful lusts. This antithetical view was somewhat tempered by the notion that there would be frequent variants in the spiritual condition of the unregenerate. That condition would vary from hardened fellow citizens who lived openly in sin, and fellow men who were inclined to be melancholy. The largest segment of the population was between these two extremes. According to the Puritans, this middle segment lived in false security since they did not recognize their spiritual misery—albeit that some consciences would be stirred during certain seasons or noteworthy events.[37]

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35. Peter Lake, "'A Charitable Christian Hatred': The Godly and Their Enemies in the 1630s," in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, eds., *The Culture of English Puritanism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 145–83; Peter Lake, "Anti-Puritanism: The Structure of a Prejudice," in Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, eds., *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 80–98; Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 211–13; Christopher Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England, 1570–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 101–41; Alexandra Walsham, "The Godly and Popular Culture," in John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds., *Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 277–93.

36. Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 269–80; Haigh, *Plain Man's Pathways*, 101–41.

37. Luttmer, "Persecutors," 37–43, 56, 62–63; Lake, "A Charitable Christian Hatred," 150–56.

Arena of Temptation and Repression

Already the title page of *The Christian Warfare* proved that Downame viewed the world as the arena of temptation, and thereby particularly had in mind the spiritual harm that was inflicted by "tentations of prosperitie." Although the pleasures of life, such as honor, riches, and pleasure were gifts of God that—when responsibly used—could enrich life and also be engaged for the cause of God's kingdom, they could simultaneously function as manifestations of "worldly and carnall prosperitie," and thereby open the door to sin. Satan's relentless activity made this a real danger. However, the complicity of the flesh, as the common denominator of man's sinful inclinations, was likewise perilous.

In his depiction of the world, Downame established a close link between those matters that led believers into sin and the community of unconverted fellow citizens. He contrasted the community of the godly with a primarily unconverted society in which a worldly lifestyle was predominant.[38] Downame's overarching thought was that these nominal Christians, by their lifestyle, could easily infect true believers.

Bunyan also highlighted the external sociological aspect of the world in his assessment of the repression of the godly. The change in circumstances during that period undoubtedly played a role in this. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the dissenters encountered political opposition, and in Bunyan's case, persecution.[39]

Grace Abounding showed how Bunyan was deeply influenced by John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"). In this book, Bunyan not only discovered that the Church had been oppressed for centuries, but also the power of a sustained profession of faith.[40] Once Bunyan's spiritual deliverance became a reality, he was confronted with being literally imprisoned. Bunyan recognized that death might be imminent. Thus, he vividly described his execution as being "on the ladder, with the rope about my neck." In the account of his arrest and trial, *A Relation of the Imprisonment*, Bunyan presented himself as a patient defender of the gospel who was prepared to be a martyr.[41]

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38. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 422, 427.

39. Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2002), 127–73.

40. For the significance of Foxe within Bunyan's writings, see Thomas S. Freeman, "A Library in Three Volumes: Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' in the Writings of John Bunyan," *Bunyan Studies* 5 (Autumn 1994): 47–57.

41. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, 101, 104–31.

Bunyan's allegories commonly depicted the way the believer was to navigate life through a world of much opposition. At the beginning of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the character Pliable, who represented counterfeit Christianity, declared that persevering Christians would ultimately encounter martyrdom. The lions that guarded the Palace Beautiful were symbols of repression capable of causing the characters Timorous and Mistrust to flee and Christian to be fearful—until, of course, Christian discovered that the lions were chained. However, these chained lions posed such a threat that Timorous and Mistrust abandoned their pilgrimage and Christian became fearful.

The notion of persecution also came to the fore by way of giants such as Apollyon, Pope, Pagan, and Despair. Whereas Bunyan viewed Apollyon and Despair as adversaries that sought to undermine the spiritual well-being of the main character, the other adversaries were more symbolic of physical persecution. When Christian departed from the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death, light reflected along a long history of persecution instigated by Pagan and Pope. However, Pagan had died and Pope was presented as an old and shackled figure. Although Pope granted Christian permission to pass on, he also threatened him with the possibility of a future burning at the stake. Indeed, Bunyan viewed the growing Roman-Catholic influence with the English state church as a troubling development.[42]

The Vanity Fair episode depicted how Bunyan viewed his surrounding world as a place of repression. The indictments leveled against Christian and Faithful in a trial were described in great detail and set before the reader a society that valued societal and religious norms. Faithful was depicted as a martyr whose faith was steadfast.[43]

In *The Holy War*, the theme of repression was expressed through the army of Bloodmen who, being inspired by Diabolus, aimed for the destruction of Mansoul, thereby symbolizing the lengthy history of persecution and the assaults upon non-conformists after 1660.[44] When the recapture of the city ultimately failed, these Bloodmen were taken prisoner and executed. Bunyan's conviction was that persecutors would ultimately be persecuted themselves.

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42. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 246.

43. Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 97; John R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563–1694* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 205.

44. Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Factious and Seditious People: John Bunyan and his Church, 1628–1688* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 247.

The notion of worldly repression was also evident in *The Pilgrim's Progress, The Second Part*. In this case, the target of this repression was primarily Christiana and her traveling companions. Here various giants were symbolic of repression. Giant Grim, also referred to as Giant Bloody-man, represented persecution at the beginning of the 1680s. Giant Maul—who, just like Giant Pope, lived in a cave—represented the Roman Catholic threat of James II and his adversarial legislation toward the nonconformists. The threat of repression appeared to decline near the end of part 2, for the atmosphere of Vanity Fair appeared to be more moderate than in part 1. This was probably indicative of a decline in persecution during the period of the 1680s.[45] Nevertheless, there was the continued threat of an expanding Roman Catholicism, symbolized by a monster that periodically attacked the city, but was ultimately defeated.

The Flesh

The flesh was the third enemy in Puritan spiritual warfare. This adversary resided in the inner man of the believer. Satan, however, could exert a strong influence on the Christian warrior because he had an accomplice in the human soul that could readily ignite and result in the commission of sin.

The close relationship between the devil and the flesh was uniquely articulated by Ambrose, who posited that Satan focused his temptations upon the particular sins that each Christian inclined to in his natural disposition. According to Ambrose, Satan would stir one up to focus intensely upon the treasures of this world by holding before him monetary gain, riches, and honor. And to another Satan would stimulate wantonness by all manner of lustful objects that were sexual. The battle against his satanically stimulated flesh would, for the Christian warrior, ultimately be a battle with himself.[46]

John Owen gave the most detailed presentation of this inner confrontation by presenting the most systematic and in-depth analysis of the human soul and its sinful lusts. Owen placed this spiritual warfare in the pneumatological context of the new birth as a real and existential renewal of man by God's Spirit. In his *Pneumatologia* he gave an extensive and detailed description of this anthropological-psychological transformation that occurred when man received a new, supernatural capacity that

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45. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 511–12.
46. Ambrose, *Compleat Works of Isaac Ambrose*, 55–60.

would enable him to live as a believer.[47] Within this psychological context, there would at the same time be a two-fold tension. For within the spiritually renewed man there would be a "contrary, inbred, habitual principle of sin and enmity against God." The word "habitual" was indicative of an unalterable disposition that would relentlessly oppose a spiritual disposition, drawing the Christian life continually into a perilous place.[48] Guided by Romans 7, Owen, in *The Nature, Power, Deceit and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin*, spoke of indwelling sin as a law. However, he also used other designations such as the "old man," the flesh, lust, and the "body of death."[49] The immutable character of the law therefore favored the notion of sinful habit or disposition, which prompted Owen to remark, "Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin."[50] He distinguished between the "habitual frame of the heart" and the "natural propensity or habitual inclination of the law of sin in the heart." In this, he intended to say that the heart of the believer was indeed governed by a new habit or disposition, and would therefore no longer be naturally inclined toward sin. However, the remaining, residual, indwelling sin would constantly stir up a desire to commit evil, resulting in continuing spiritual welfare. Due to the constant presence of this corrupt principle, all sorts of sins would not only pose an ongoing threat, but could assert themselves to such an extent that they would gain the upper hand and negatively impact the quality of the Christian life. The fact that this law was active in the inner man of the believer also emphasized that this was a formidable opponent. External sinful temptations would bring forth that which already resided in the Christian. Owen believed that most believers were insufficiently aware of this internal danger, and would therefore be insufficiently watchful. However, he took this inherent principle of sin very seriously.

Owen described in detail how this principle of "indwelling sin" was capable of inhibiting the continual influx of grace and triggering the commission of sin, which could result in spiritual backsliding. Sin was capable of distracting the mind from focusing on the biblical perspective regarding the commission of sin by misinterpreting the nature of grace, so that yielding to sin would be rationalized by the promise of forgiveness. Owen was convinced that evil would thus steadily gain the upper hand. Regarding the

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47. John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, 16 vols. (London: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850–1853), III:218–19, 329.

48. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, III:166.

49. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:158–59.

50. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:177.

"especial duties" of personal prayer and meditation that forced the mind to govern one's thoughts, sin would attempt to distract the governing principle of the soul from a concentrated exercise of these duties. Moreover, sin would seek to cause the mind to lose sight of the witness of Scripture as an antidote to the power of sin, such as that to sin was to transgress God's law and would trigger heavenly retribution; that it directly contradicted God's love and mercy; that it disregarded Christ's redemptive work and challenged the indwelling of the Spirit.[51]

Sin was also actively engaged in the realm of our affections. It could so seduce one's affections by the presentation of sinful objects that the soul would become "entangled in frequent imaginations about the object of their lust." Using the imagery of a net, Owen demonstrated the devious tactics of indwelling sin:

> And in vain should the deceit of sin spread its snares and nets for the entanglement of the soul, whilst the eyes of the mind are intent upon what it doth, and so stir up the wings of its will and affections to carry it away and avoid it. But if the eyes be put out or diverted, the wings are of very little use for escape; and therefore, this is one of the ways which is used by them who take birds or fowls in their nets. They have false lights or shows of things, to divert the sight of their prey; and when that is done, they take the season to cast their nets upon them.[52]

After first having distracted the mind from the necessary watchfulness, thereby giving room for corrupt desires to manifest themselves, indwelling sin would, assisted by one's imagination, render sin attractive and desirable to one's affections. This mental delusion would, however, conceal the perils of the wickedness of sin.

In Owen's analysis, however, sin would only actually be committed when, by seducing the mind and entangling the affections, this adversarial disposition succeeded in persuading the will to acquiesce in the commission of evil:

> The third success of the deceit of sin in its progressive work is the *conception of actual sin*…. Now, the conception of sin, in order unto its perpetration, can be nothing but the consent of the will; for as without the consent of the will sin cannot be committed, so where the

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51. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:188–202. See Gleason, *John Calvin and John Owen on Mortification*, 116–17.

52. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:247.

will hath consented unto it, there is nothing in the soul to hinder its actual accomplishment.[53]

This quote underscores how prominent a place the will occupied within the context of Owen's psychology of the soul—not only in his general analysis of the components of the human soul and the new birth, but also regarding the outworking of sin in the life of the Christian. Owen referred to this acquiescence in believers as a partial acquiescence, for the principle of grace caused the soul to be oriented toward that which was good, whereas in unbelievers there would be a wholehearted acquiescence. However, the acquiescence of the will was the result of what preceded it: the distraction of the mind and the entanglement of the affections. When this occurred, the participation of the will inevitably followed.

Owen described the functioning of this process. First, the mind would be seduced by the corrupt reasoning that one could always seek God's pardon. Thereby the mind would fail in being watchful toward sin. Subsequently, it would seek to engage the will by focusing on the pleasure of sin and obscuring the peril of its wickedness. This generally happened either in acute moments of temptation, or gradually during a period of increasing carelessness. Being seduced by the mind, one's entangled affections would occasionally influence the will either by sudden impulses or by a high frequency of attempts. The moment the will acquiesced, the sinful deed would be committed. Owen argued, however, that this did not necessarily have to be the case. The reason for this must be sought in God's renewing grace, which he referred to as "special assisting grace." Through this grace God could so inhibit sin that the will did not proceed with the actual deed. Although one's ultimate redemption would thereby not be endangered, the quality and the health of one's spiritual life could regress significantly.[54]

Satan and Indwelling Sin

Although Owen primarily focused on the nature of sin, he also devoted several paragraphs to the relationship between sin and the devil in a publication titled *Of Temptation* (1658). Prompted by Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," he addressed the nature of temptation, particularly how a believer could be ensnared and how they could either prevent or resist the temptation by watchfulness.[55]

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53. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:251.
54. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:251–57.
55. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:91–101.

Satan, the world, or human beings were the means by which tempta-
tion could lead the believer into sin. In so doing, the devil could operate
independently or enlist the services of worldly issues and persons. How-
ever, he could also forge a coalition with the believer's own corruptions in
which he found "a sure party within our own breasts." Owen did not expand
this notion in *Of Temptation*, but only stated that the devil would greatly
exert himself to tempt a believer to commit sin, being provoked to do so by
attractive objects or tailor-made opportunities. In the hour of temptation,
Satan could bring a believer into situations or confront him with situations
in which his inherent sinful desires would be stimulated more than usual.
When the tempted believer yielded in such circumstances, indwelling sin
would manifest itself.[56]

In *The Nature, Deceit and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin
in Believers*, Owen also analyzed the relationship between indwelling sin
and Satan. When God's Spirit implanted new life in regeneration, God's
adversary suffered a fundamental defeat. However, his departure did not
mean that he would yield permanently. Rather, from that moment for-
ward, he would seek to regain his mastery over the believer. The believer
must, therefore, be continually watchful. But sin would remain active in
the believer to lead him to relax his alertness, for this was to the devil's
advantage. He would strive to make the Christian careless and remiss in the
exercise of his spiritual duties, such as the reading of Scripture, meditation,
and prayer. In conjunction with such a decline, there could be a decline in
one's first love and in the exercise of faith. The principle of sin could also
stimulate a desire within the heart, or entangle the soul in worldly affairs
that are an invitation for the devil to strike.[57]

Thus, there was evidently a mutual relationship between indwelling sin
and Satan. God's preeminent adversary could, with his accomplices, make
perilous inroads in a man's experiential world. Sin, in turn, could open
doors to permit the enemy to enter.

The Christian Warrior

The other side of the spectrum will now be addressed: Puritan literature
regarding spiritual warfare contrasted the three-headed enemy and the per-
son of the Christian warrior.

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56. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:135.
57. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:294–302.

Downame believed that the battling believer could only be correctly evaluated from God's vantage point. He viewed the relationship between heaven and the Christian warrior as that between God the Father and His child. This relationship, in addition to implying direction and training, also implied true victories in the present and the promise of a definitive triumph in the future. This paternal warranty was embedded in election as proceeding from God's eternal love—the first link of the *ordo salutis* and the fountain of regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification.[58]

The Christian warrior engaged himself within a Christological context. Puritans not only referred to the soteriological significance of Christ's death and resurrection as the principal victory over all hostile powers, but also to Christ's temptation in the wilderness. In *The Combate Betweene Christ and the Devill Displayed*, Perkins not only focused on the exemplary significance of Christ's conduct but also on the redemptive dimension when Christ prevailed over the assaults of the devil. By resisting the three-fold temptation of the devil, Christ came to the foreground as the deliverer of His people, giving His followers the warranty that they would also triumph (albeit in phases). Those who successfully resisted the enemy in this life would experience victory.[59]

The third context to be considered regarding the Christian warrior was a pneumatological one. According to Owen, God's Spirit would cause the new habit (implanted in regeneration) to grow by strengthening the gracious gifts of faith and love that proceeded from this habitus.[60] This formal description of the process of sanctification was closely connected to the relational backdrop of the Christian life. Owen dealt with sanctification as proceeding from union with Christ.[61]

Opposing Satan: Grace and Responsibility
William Gouge and William Gurnall articulated most clearly that the believer was called to be engaged in a relentless battle with Satan. This came as no surprise, for both men took Ephesians 6:10–20 very seriously—the passage containing the apostolic exhortation to resist all demonic powers with spiritual armor. The responsibility of the Christian warrior was

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58. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 4–5, 81.
59. Perkins, *Workes of William Perkins*, III:406.
60. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, III:388–89, 393–94, 436–37, 469–71, 475–76.
61. Kelly M. Kapic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 147–207.

expressed most concretely in the two components of this armor that were highlighted by both authors: the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit.

In response to the satanic suggestion that sinful men cannot possibly believe, Gouge pointed out that faith proceeded from the Spirit, who taught sinners to trust in the Word of God. He then linked this emphasis upon grace to human responsibility and the need to use expectantly the means God employs to produce faith.[62]

Gouge articulated this same theme when he addressed the satanic doubt that faith could not possibly prevail. He replied by referring to three matters that were indispensable for persevering in faith—especially the reading of Scripture and personal prayer. When one failed to make use of these means or used them irregularly, the quality of one's spiritual life would decline. The crucial importance of faith for Gurnall was particularly evident in his discussion of Satan's temptation to yield to despair. In this context, Gurnall indicated that faith actively engaged itself by concentrating on God's promise. Over against the devilish temptation which confronted the Christian with the magnitude of his sins, faith would focus upon the immeasurable dimension of grace.[63]

The dialectic of grace and human contribution was articulated in Gouge's discussion on how the sword of the Spirit was symbolic of the Word of God. He posited that the Christian was called to oppose the adversary with the words of Scripture. Although the offensive weapon was "of the Spirit," this emphasis upon the active engagement of faith did not imply independence. One could, therefore, only use this weapon effectively in a spiritual manner by reading, meditation, and faith. Gurnall likewise addressed the use of this offensive weapon even more concretely by formulating biblical replies to all manner of misleading devilish insinuations—including heretical notions regarding the faith, mitigation of sinful practices, and abusing difficult circumstances in life to cast aspersions upon God.[64]

The treatment of the subject of prayer revealed how much grace and responsibility were intertwined. Gouge deemed prayer to be a blessed means for using the armor properly, for this proved that the warrior was not striving in his own strength. According to Gurnall, dependence upon God's

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62. William Gouge, *The Whole-Armour of God* (London: Iohn Beale for Iohn Grismond, 1627), 140.

63. Gouge, *Whole-Armour of God*, 141–42; William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, ed. D. Dundas M'Isaac, 2 vols. (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1864), II:104.

64. Gouge, *Whole-Armour of God*, 158–163; Gurnall, *Christian in Complete Armour*, II:220–25.

grace was especially evident in "deprecatory prayer," wherein the petition to be cleansed from sin focused upon both the guilt and the defiling power of sin. The believer, having thus prayed, was called, however, to engage himself fully in doing battle with evil.[65]

Opposing Satan: Practical Exhortations

As an antidote to satanic insinuations that sought to deny the *pro me* character of the gospel, Puritan authors pointed to God's salvific promises. Simultaneously, they also addressed the distinctives of spiritual life.

For example, Downame gave clarity to believers regarding their personal interest in salvation by directing them to the promises of the gospel. The application of these promises came in turn: the hearer of the promise first concluded that he had faith, and he then concluded that he was a partaker of the promised salvation. However, this afforded the devil an opportunity to challenge the validity of that conclusion, and compelled Downame to list various internal and external distinctives of true faith.[66]

Downame also emphasized that the crucial difference between true believers and nominal believers was that sin was incidental for the former and habitual in the latter. At the same time, he sought pastorally to minister to weak Christians by positing that the inner struggle generated by a perceived lack of the marks of faith did, in fact, validate the authenticity of their faith.[67]

The connection between the promises and the marks of grace was also presented by Brooks. In his treatment of the satanic insinuations that could lead to despondency, he pointed believers to the redeeming work of Christ. The marks of grace also played a role when, for example, the devil insinuated that repeated regression in committing the same sins challenged the authenticity of the Christian's faith. Brooks countered by asserting that though the lives of believers were imperfect, they nevertheless were determined to battle sin and that temptations could not inflict harm as long as they met with fierce resistance.[68]

Brooks was most practical when arguing how believers could resist Satan. In short, he argued that believers must be radical in abhorrence and avoidance of sin. For example, he strongly condemned the satanic delusion

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65. Gouge, *Whole-Armour of God*, 166; Gurnall, *Christian in Complete Armour*, II:431, 436–38.
66. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 104, 123–24.
67. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 305.
68. Brooks, *Works of Thomas Brooks*, I:115.

that Christians may involve themselves in circumstances that would readily lead to sin on the grounds that they could immediately retreat. Believers must radically reject such seduction, for it implied a view of man that was far too optimistic.[69]

Opposing the World: Distance
Downame described the relationship between Puritan believers and their fellow citizens as unclear. Although believers must engage in society, Downame emphasized the necessity of maintaining distance between believers and non-believers due to the danger of spiritual corruption.[70] He spoke of the need for believers to distance themselves from worldly pursuits such as honor, riches, and all manner of pleasure. Believers must prevent their hearts from being more occupied with perishing earthly treasures than God's gracious gifts—all of which would proceed from the related concepts of being pilgrims and sojourners:

> For who would not contemne a flitting tent, in comparison of a goodly mansion and stately palace.… And who would not preferre his pedling freedome in a country village for a few daies, before his enfranchizment and priviledges in the chiefe city of the countrie which hee may haue for euer?[71]

Since a pilgrim would focus upon the future reality of heavenly glory; he, as a sojourner, would not permit himself to be distracted by the pleasures of this world. Downame's objective in his writing was to mobilize the believer to distance himself from all those aspects of his surrounding world that would tempt him to sin. Only then would he emerge victoriously from this spiritual warfare.

Downame also addressed the comparative and utilitarian relationship between the two:

> If the Lord in his rich bountie, hath appointed vnto vs a place of such profit and delight for our exile and banishment, how rich and full of all pleasures is his own countrie, which he reserueth for his owne vse, to show therein his owne glorious presence, & and for the reward of those whom he most graceth with his fauour?[72]

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69. Brooks, *Works of Thomas Brooks*, I:40.
70. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 421.
71. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 695.
72. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 716

In anticipation of the future heavenly glory, the pilgrim could enjoy this earthly reality and in some measure judge it favorably. However, due to the temporary nature of the earthly realm, such enjoyment would be very provisional.

Opposing the World: Resistance

According to Bunyan, persecution provided an opportunity to confess the truth publicly and even to join the long tradition of Christian martyrs.[73] This positive view of martyrdom—combined with the conviction that secular governments were divinely appointed—stimulated Bunyan to embrace the classic notion of "passive resistance." He believed that one must undergo suffering patiently and that disobeying civil laws was only permitted when they contradicted God's precepts.[74]

Bunyan's deferential attitude toward the English government under Charles II, depicted implicitly in Vanity Fair, appeared to conflict with elements of the *Holy War*, which proved to be much more critical in their assessment of the authorities. The political environment around 1680 had become significantly more challenging for dissenters. The reformation of city governments by royalists brought councilmen to power who were predominantly hostile to them, and the same time the threat of new persecution was looming.[75]

Various allegorical elements in *The Holy War* appeared to refer to the tense political situation of the early 1680s, while at the same time concealing what they intended to communicate. When Diabolus conquered the city Mansoul, rather than being its mayor he appointed himself as king. If the reader were to have missed the reference to Charles II, he hardly could have missed the implications of this transition—Diabolus reorganized the city and replaced the mayor, Lord Understanding, and the city clerk, Mr. Conscience. The members of the city council, however, were depicted as caricatures of the king's newly appointed leaders in the reorganized city councils. When Diabolus not only treated ministers with hostility but also permitted the city to be filled with atheistic pamphlets and immoral lyrics and literature, he was exposed as a rebellious tyrant. The political message of *The Holy War* thus expressed a stinging criticism of the English

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73. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom*, 212–13.

74. Richard Greaves, "The Spirit and the Sword: Bunyan and the Stuart State," in Richard Greaves, ed., *John Bunyan and English Nonconformity* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1992), 104–105.

75. Greaves, "The Spirit and the Sword," 110.

government. This behavior was contrasted with that of the godly sovereign, set forth in the person of Immanuel. Immanuel reclaimed Mansoul, issued new laws, imprisoned the Diabolians, and appointed Lord Understanding to a responsible position.[76]

When one understands the spiritual and political opposition to Diabolus, it is clear that Bunyan intended to depict the subversive ridicule of tyrannical government and to call Christians to engage in active and even armed conflict. Bunyan's frequent criticism of oppressive rulers that surfaced in *The Holy War*—especially by way of the parallels between Diabolus and Charles II—must ultimately be interpreted as references to God's future judgment upon them.[77]

The notion that Bunyan's emphasis of intense resistance in *The Holy War* should not be interpreted politically becomes more credible upon evaluating a work that was published in 1684: *Seasonable Counsel: or, Advice to sufferers*.[78] In contrast with the sharp and provocative tone of his war allegory, the very measured tone of this work is remarkable. Respect for divinely appointed government here coalesced with a fully developed "ethic of suffering" in which the necessity and benefit of suffering were addressed in depth, while at the same time addressing the correct disposition when one suffered. The measured tone of *Seasonable Counsel* could partly be explained in light of political events. In 1683, the so-called "Rye House Plot" was discovered—a conspiracy of radical, non-conformist elements against the English king. Its discovery and the subsequent thorough investigation by the government posed a considerable threat to the position of the dissenters. Bunyan's connections in radical circles could also have rendered him suspect. By distancing himself from the rebels, he might have attempted to protect himself while simultaneously preventing any cross-examination about his contacts.[79]

For Bunyan, resisting the government meant, at most, a *passive* resistance when one could not obey an ordinance in light of Scripture. However,

76. Bunyan, *Holy War*, 17, 25–28, 30, 40, 85, 119–132, 137, 145.

77. Greaves, "The Spirit and the Sword," 125–26.

78. John Bunyan, *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan, Vol.10: Seasonable Counsel; A Discourse upon the Pharisee and the Publican*, ed. Owen C. Watkins, in John Bunyan, *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, ed. Richard L. Greaves, 13 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), X:4–104.

79. Richard Greaves, "Amid the *Holy War*: Bunyan and the Ethic of Suffering," in Richard Greaves, ed., *John Bunyan and English Nonconformity* (London: The Hambledon Press 1992), 182–83.

while the political connotations of *The Holy War* cannot be denied, it appears that, in the 1680s, Bunyan pressed this further than he had done previously. Particularly because of his connections in radical circles, he might have expected that an eventual rebellion against tyranny, initiated by a coalition of subordinate government entities and spiritual leaders, would have been supported by his fellow believers.[80]

Opposing the Flesh: Fighting Against Contrary Self

In his *Of the Combate of the Flesh and Spirit*, Perkins described the battle of the Christian warrior against the third enemy, the flesh, as an event that impacted the entire human soul: the intellect, the will, and the affections. According to Perkins, opposing the flesh was as a heavy battle. For the flesh was lodged within the walls of the human soul and was capable of relentlessly generating sinful desires. This activity was opposed by the continual operation of God's Spirit who activated and stimulated the spiritual *habitus* of the soul, thereby equipping the Christian warrior to achieve a future victory.[81]

Owen gave a detailed account of how the renewed spiritual propensity of the believer battled with the adversary within his soul. These themes surfaced when he dealt with mortification. He defined this in his *Pneumatologia* as follows:

> There being this universal contrariety, opposition, contending, and warfare, between grace and sin, the Spirit and the flesh, in their inward principles, powers, operations, and outward effects, the work and duty of mortification consists in a constant taking part with grace, in its principle, actings, and fruits, against the principle, actings and fruits of sin.[82]

By using the term "grace," Owen indicated that this event was founded upon the redemptive work of Christ and functioned under the auspices of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was linked with Christ's victory, the position of the believer, and the practical aspect of this warfare. He united these into one spiritual composite.

Owen was convinced that sinful activities could readily assert themselves as a consequence of being remiss in one's daily devotion. In his *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, based on Roman 8:13, he addressed

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80. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 438.
81. Perkins, *Workes of William Perkins*, I:470–71.
82. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, III:543.

spiritual mortification in great detail.[83] Using the premise that mortification was a process superintended by the Spirit, Owen took issue with Roman Catholic monasticism, which he believed distorted mortification by making it primarily an external exercise undertaken by man using external means, such as vows, penances, and discipline. These practices were subservient to spiritual mortification, such as prayer, fasting, and meditation, to be an end in themselves.[84]

In seeking to define the process of mortification in practical terms, Owen highlighted the foundational meaning of one's spiritual habit or disposition by defining it as "grace in its principle," for it impacted the principle of sin at its very root. Furthermore, it was important that the Holy Spirit enabled this principle of holiness to flourish in the soul, for the stronger it manifested itself in various internal and external activities, the more one's sinful habit or disposition, along with all its inherent expressions, would be weakened.[85]

Owen connected this more formal description in which the Spirit and the living principle created by Him were central, with a more relational analysis in which Christ and the life of faith were central. Focus on the cross was of crucial importance for the effective execution of the mortification process. Being united to Christ by faith meant being united to a Redeemer whose death implied the mortal wounding of indwelling sin.[86]

Based on the premise of his generally formal and his relational formulations of mortification, Owen gave guidelines for the practice of mortification. For the Christian warrior, it was of primary importance that he would be conscious of both the danger and the evil of sin. Owen argued that the believer must view a yielding to sin as a failure to appreciate the redemptive work of the triune God. Thereby the believer preeminently discredited the suffering and death of Christ on the cross. Owen described the latter as an existential event:

> Look on Him whom thou hast pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to thy soul, "What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on!… What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? How shall I hold up my head with any boldness before

83. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:1–86.

84. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:17–19. See Gleason, *John Calvin and John Owen on Mortification*, 122.

85. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, III:543–44, 551–552, VI:19.

86. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, III:560–62; VI, 19, 25, 37–38.

him? Do I account communion with Him of so little value, that for this vile lust's sake I have scarce left him any room in my heart?… In the meantime, what shall I say to the Lord? Love, mercy, grace, goodness, peace, joy, consolation, I have despised them all, and esteemed them as a thing of nought, that I might harbour a lust in my heart.[87]

Owen's perspective was that the cross was of redemptive significance. For the cross was where Christ triumphed over evil and therefore was the focal point and source of inspiration to battle sin effectively. Thus, when the believer, guided by the Spirit, focused spiritually on the dying Christ, this would trigger repentance and faith and would mobilize him to resist evil daily and effectively:

Let faith look on Christ in the gospel as he is set forth dying and crucified for us. Look on him under the weight of our sins, praying, bleeding, dying; bring him in that condition into thy heart by faith; apply his blood so shed to thy corruptions: do this daily.[88]

Did the process of mortification truly lead to the demise of sin? Owen's answer was apparently no—for mortification was incapable of removing sin from the heart. Owen viewed this as evidence of the imperfection of our earthly reality: that which would be a reality after death could not be achieved in this life. Owen emphasized again that the entire process of mortification was superintended by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit shed light upon the evil of sin, unveiled the fullness of Christ, applied the cross to the heart in its sin-mortifying power, and promised that He would guarantee the victorious outcome of this battle. Although mortification was an all-encompassing and intensive process, the superintendence of the Holy Spirit guaranteed the ultimate termination of this battle.

Battle in Light of the Victory
Although Satan and his cohorts were set before the reader in a generally dramatic fashion, some authors from the very outset focused already on the outcome of the conflict.

In his *Of the Combate of the Flesh and Spirit*, Perkins indicated that the dominance of the spirit, being the indestructible creation of God's Spirit, was determinative for the victory of the Christian warrior during

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87. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:58.
88. Owen, *Works of John Owen*, VI:85.

the various phases of the journey of faith as well as the end of his life.[89] For Perkins, the tenor of spiritual warfare was determined from the very outset by the perspective of the ultimate victory—albeit that it certainly could not be labeled as exultant.

Downame also addressed spiritual warfare from the vantage point of victory by pointing to the work of Christ. His redemptive victory not only guaranteed His help along the way, but it also had an eschatological radiance. When Downame proceeded to describe Satan as the most dangerous adversary, he did not thereby minimize one's initiative in the Christian warfare, but rather argued that it would lead to a more balanced pathway to victory. Spiritual warfare would, from the very outset, be both intensive and full of expectation.[90]

Although Brooks emphasized that the prospect of future victory was hopeful, he did not believe that this was an automatic outcome. His emphasis upon the duty of believers suggested that they would achieve the end result only after having been engaged in battle their entire lives. Also, for him the eschatological component stimulated believers to be engaged in battle and encouraged them.[91]

Continuity and Discontinuity

In addressing spiritual warfare, Puritan authors built on a classic spiritual theme that had been addressed by the early Christian desert fathers. The fathers had highlighted that such warfare focused primarily on the external infiltration of demonic forces, which was able to produce eight deadly thoughts.[92] In the West, the monk John Cassianus (c. 360–435) believed that spiritual warfare was primarily an internal battle between the spirit and the flesh of the human soul. Though Cassianus still believed that one could resist his carnal desires by exercising his free will, Augustine emphasized man's inability to choose that which was good. His doctrine of original sin also implied that a man's flesh was in bondage to his sinful desires and therefore operated as a very formidable adversary.[93] This spiritual warfare against such a perilous internal enemy could only have a favorable outcome by God's omnipotent grace. Although the Puritan position on spiritual

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89. Perkins, *Workes of William Perkins*, I:471–72.
90. Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 6–7, 50.
91. Brooks, *Works of Thomas Brooks*, I:164.
92. David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Battle in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), *passim*.
93. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, 240–46.

warfare had similarities with Cassianus's inner battle against oneself, theologically and anthropologically it was more closely aligned with Augustine's emphasis on man's impotency to resist his inner evil and his dependence on God's grace.

The pastoral continuity and discontinuity with the Western Catholic Church is evident in Jean Gerson (1363–1429), a representative of the late medieval "Frömmigkeitstheologie."[94] On the one hand, his views were similar to Puritan views because, for Gerson, strife regarding the assurance of faith was the focal point of spiritual warfare. This pertained to readers with a timid disposition who desired to live a godly life, but were oppressed about their own missteps.[95] Gerson desired to comfort troubled readers by impressing upon them that they had the spiritual potential to resist demonic delusion; that is, as long as they trusted humbly in God's mercy. This gave hope for the future—a hope that was undermined, however, by fear for God's justice. In contrast to the Puritans, Gerson stated that the believer merited a reward if he guarded against spiritual arrogance by resisting sin, took the counsel of confessors seriously, humbly confessed committed evil, and stood in awe of God's justice.[96]

Among Protestant reformers, continuity was apparent with Luther who focused spiritual warfare, especially on the so called "high" temptations which bear a strong satanic influence. These "high" temptations were strongly connected with fear of God's wrath, lack of assurance about one's eternal election, and despondency. Sometimes Luther wrote about the most dangerous activity by which the devil aimed to lead the believer to spiritual despondency—an excessive fear of the dark side of God's predestination: his eternal rejection.[97] In writing about resistance against Satan and sin, Luther referred continually to Christ. This Christological focus contained several elements. Primarily, Christ was the only help for His tempted people, because He was the most obvious revelation of God's mercy. Second,

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94. For a definition: Berndt Hamm, "Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie? Überlegungen zum 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert," in Hans-Jörg Nieden und Marcel Nieden, Hgs., *Praxis Pietatis. Beiträge zu Theologie und Frömmigkeit in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999), 9–45.

95. Sven Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit und Scupulositas im Späten Mittelalter. Studien zu Johannes Gerson und Gattungen der Frömmigkeitstheologie seiner Zeit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 8–46.

96. Grosse, *Heilsungewißheit*, 113–119.

97. For example: *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 1 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1912), 234, 557–58; *Luthers Werke* 40 III (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1930), 341.

Luther related his Christological focus to justification, believing that the Christian was repeatedly confronted with his personal sins as well as his lack of power to beat his opponent. Luther, however, continually offered relief to the tempted believer by asserting that he could only stand before God due to Christ's suffering on the cross.[98]

Conclusion

Puritans addressed temptation, spiritual insecurity, and foreboding despair first by detecting in them Satan's hidden influence, then by analyzing his devices, and finally by proposing means to resist him. Being influenced by the devil, the world functioned as an intermediary link, and the corrupt human heart functioned as the fertile soil for external temptations. As to the pastoral and psychological guidance of the believer, the Puritan movement emerged as the English variant of European Pietism in which the Christian and his experience had the preeminence.

The Puritans presented a detailed treatment of the devil's assault upon the inner man. The crucial position of the flesh affirmed that their works were characterized by an emphasis upon the ever-present danger of sin. Although Satan was presented as a mighty and tangible adversary, this was at the same time subordinate to the inner battle occurring in the human soul.[99] The primary reason for this was that sin would endanger the experiential relationship with God.

While Puritan literature about spiritual warfare warned of the danger of sin, it simultaneously sought to prevent lack of assurance and spiritual despair—particularly in the lives of weak Christians. The authors who addressed spiritual despair most intensely, Gilpin and Bunyan, interacted with the melancholy generated in the period following 1660. While Gilpin emphasized Satan's role, Bunyan criticized the repressive government. The battle with the devil then became an internal struggle to trust in God's promises—particularly for weak Christians. Whereas true believers were earnestly admonished, the comfort afforded to weak Christians was central in Puritan literature.

The analysis of the Christian warrior and spiritual resistance made clear how much the Puritan approach to spiritual warfare was determined by the

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98. *Luthers Werke* 40 I (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1911), 77–78, 276, 546.

99. Theodore Bozeman speaks about a "struggle against their contrary self" in Theodore Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion & Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 94.

foundational theological structure of the Trinitarian activity of God's grace. Although fundamentally in line with the Reformed emphasis on God's justifying grace, the anthropological-psychological components were unique to the Puritan view of grace. Owen gave the most detailed exposition of this view of the new birth. At the same time, spiritual transformation did not imply a definitive deliverance from sin due to the residual and corrupt habitus that can tempt one to sin. Only when the graces proceeding from the new habit were exercised would the new-life principle gradually prevail. Owen's focus on the cross of Christ as the death knell for sinful lusts in the daily and real battle of the believer was representative of a noteworthy fine-tuning of Puritan spirituality—an interconnection of Trinitarian theology, *historia salutis*, and experiential piety. The Trinitarian articulation of the life of faith viewed spiritual confrontation in light of the ultimate victory. This visionary perspective was determinative for the climate of spiritual warfare as delineated by the Puritans. However much this warfare might occupy the believer, this God-given perspective yielded certainty, joy, and hope in the reality of his life of faith.