Given the standard historical narrative of the history of the English church, the whole idea that Puritanism might be considered as in any way ecumenical in orientation would seem to be somewhat bizarre. The traditional picture of Anglicanism is that of a church which built its theology and its liturgical practices through a careful reclamation of the broad patristic heritage. It thus presented to the world of the Reformation a *via media* which was less obsessed with those things which made Protestantism different from medieval Catholicism and more concerned to produce a broad-based church capable of providing a spiritual home for a wide variety of theological opinions, a project which was successfully carried forward through the Reformation until after the Enlightenment.\(^1\) In this narrative, Puritanism was an aberration, a narrow creed which stopped the playing of ball games on a Sunday, nurtured intolerance towards those who held different opinions on various points of theological trivia, and was ultimately sectarian, not catholic, in its ethos.\(^2\)

To demolish the shibboleths of such a thesis would take considerable time. What I wish to do in this contribution is somewhat more modest: to provide sufficient counter-evidence to the accepted historical narrative to

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1 The most famous advocate of the *via media* thesis is, of course, John Henry Newman in his (in)famous Tract XC where he argued that the Thirty-Nine Articles could be interpreted in line with what was in essence Catholic teaching. The whole notion of Anglicanism as in some way doctrinally broad and tolerant is deeply embedded in the linguistic and literary traditions surrounding the Church of England, from the novels of Anthony Trollope to everyday language, eg. the key architects of church life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were 'Latitudinarians' and those who deviated were labelled as 'sectarian' or 'fanatics'. Ironically, of course, the 'sectarians' and the 'fanatics' had little or no power and were not involved in excluding from education and from the corridors of power any who refused to conform with the practical ecclesiastical ideal which they had set up.

2 The most learned examples of such views are provided by scholars such as Hugh Trevor Roper and A. L. Rowse, but we only have to think of how the word 'Puritan' and its cognates have come to function in ordinary language to see how deeply embedded this view is within English-speaking cultures. The most popular example is that of H. L. Mencken, who claimed that Puritanism amounted to the fear that somebody, somewhere, was happy.
raise significant doubts in the minds of those who might be tempted by the apparent reasonableness of Anglicanism's popular image. I want to do this, first, by arguing that Anglicanism in fact very quickly became remarkably restricted and nationalistic in its scope, and then by pointing to the common patristic and medieval heritage of Anglican and Puritan theology. Much scholarship since the 1960s has been concerned with tracing out the roots of Reformation thought not simply in terms of both its patristic and medieval antecedents. More recently, this trajectory of research has been applied more specifically to the phenomenon of post-Reformation Reformed Orthodoxy, and, by so doing, scholars have become increasingly aware of the essential catholicity of Reformed Orthodoxy. As many mainstream Puritans were representatives of the Anglo-Saxon part of this tradition, the time is now ripe to reassess the old truisms about Anglican and Puritan. It is my proposal in this contribution, which is of necessity little more than a signpost to potential research, that Anglicanism could present itself as offering a universal, comprehensive church only because it effectively disenfranchised, marginalised, and then demonised those who might have begged to differ. Anglican views of Puritanism may tell us one thing; but it is my contention that the texts tell a somewhat different story.

Defining Puritanism

First, however, we need to define exactly what 'Puritanism' means. Much ink has been spilt over the meaning of the term, but, to cut a long story short, I shall use the word to denote that tendency to push for a more thoroughly Reformed theology and ecclesiology within sections of the Anglican Church between the early 1530s and 1662, the date of the most important Act of Uniformity. The definition is far from perfect; but it is probably as good as it gets, and will certainly serve the limited purposes to which I wish to put it in this paper.

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