In 1659, in the Hessian village of Merzhausen, Ziegenhain district, local peasants and day laborers, led by the local squire, stormed the parsonage and burned down the house of the minister to arrest a rioter he had hidden there. Merzhausen was part of the principality of Hesse-Cassel, the major Protestant, and from 1605 Calvinist, power in central Germany. By issuing the Ziegenhain order of discipline in 1539, the Hessian church had introduced the first attempt to organize local church discipline on German land. It had instituted the office of church elders to that end. Minister and elders were meant to enforce a reformation of life that would supplement the reformation of doctrine. In 1656, after the ravages of the Thirty Years’ War, the Ziegenhain order was refined and re-issued. As Heide Wunder has demonstrated in a seminal article, such orders were meant to provide a guideline for morality in both civil and ecclesiastical life. Throughout this period, the struggle against the custom of premarital pregnancy was one of the core aims of church discipline. However, during the entire first half of the seventeenth century, one out of five first-born children in the county of Ziegenhain was conceived out of wedlock. The peasants and day laborers who stormed the parsonage participated just as much in the exercise of social control as the ministers who had failed to suppress premarital pregnancy. But social control remained embedded in a popular culture that had not abandoned its own older standards of acceptable behavior. Rather, villagers had combined these older standards with the new standards of the Reformation. Because Hessian villagers failed to accuse their neighbors of lacking righteousness as defined by the theologians, the Church had to adapt. In the eighteenth century, and even well into the nineteenth, villagers had amalgamated their older popular culture and the new morality of the Reformation into a new, coherent popular culture.
In 1637, William Allen of Earls Colne, Essex, was charged with “pissing in the clock chamber so that it ran down and annoyed the church [and] easing himself nearby the chancel door in the churchyard in service time to the great annoyance of the church and churchyard and offence to the parishioners’ noses.” The archdeacon of Colchester, in whose jurisdiction Earls Colne lay, had attempted to eradicate more than just such spectacular practices. The Reformed view held that God did not only deal with the individual soul but with the entire secular community as well. The community should be bound to God’s moral law, which the magistrates, both civil and ecclesiastical, had the duty to enforce. Together with substantial inhabitants of many villages and towns, the archdeacon punished not only recusants but suppressed drinking, swearing, and Sabbath breaking. English historians have addressed this effort as the Reformation of Manners, similar in scope and intention to the enforcement of morality in Hesse. But while significant segments of the urban and rural population of Essex participated in this new popular culture of piety and put allegiance to it above loyalty to their neighbors, equally significant elements refused to submit to these new standards of behavior. In Earls Colne, since the 1590s, these two groups began to participate in mutually opposing popular cultures, splitting communities all over Essex into hostile factions.

It would be hazardous to push any comparison from just two isolated examples such as that of Merzhausen and Earls Colne too far. But these examples serve to illustrate two points. First, while the population of neither place had been turned wholesale into adherents of Reformed theology, it would be the gravest of errors to conclude that the Reformation church and its moral program had not left its mark on local popular cultures. Indeed, by the middle of the seventeenth century, significantly different relations between local communities and their mechanisms of social control, on the one hand, and the Reformation church and its program of implementing morality, on the other hand, had emerged in Hesse and Essex. These differences, however, should not primarily be understood in terms of the suppression or survival of popular culture, for popular cultures had always been molded by the doctrines of the Church. They had always served as a sphere of communication about the proper means of social control and had provided tools for such control. And they had always expressed locally accepted forms of morality. The relation between social control and popular culture was thus never simply an adversarial one. At issue here is the specific amalgamation of local mechanisms of social control, of the new tools of the Reformation church, and of the various forms and views of morality among the population.

In a seminal article Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker have argued that the willingness of members of local communities to bring the behavior of their neighbors to the attention of the courts of church and state was crucial for any understanding of the success, or failure, of new forms of social control as imposed by church and state. In many Essex communities the “hotter sort of protestants”
were willing to participate in the prosecution of their neighbors to purge sin from their communities. Not so in Hesse. Many years ago, Walther Sohm pointed out that the “Christian morality” that the Hessian Reformation attempted to establish had been practiced and desired in particular by one specific group in the region, the Anabaptists. In central Germany, however, the Anabaptists had abandoned their hope for a general reform of the Church early in the Reformation and instead had chosen to separate from their sinful neighbors.9 While many pious Protestants in many Essex communities also separated from their local church to avoid contagion from their sinful neighbors10 and the degree of cooperation between this hotter sort of Protestant and the Church of England is a contentious issue,11 there is little doubt that the hotter sort of Protestants did to a considerable degree attempt to enforce the moral law among their neighbors with the support of church and state.12 Essex townsmen and villagers did so because they had begun to forge ties with mutually opposing popular cultures with “moral economies” excluding each other and fought each other even if that meant enlisting support from outside.13 By contrast, Hessian villagers, though asking the representatives of state and church for help against outsiders, still shared a common, though transformed, popular culture.

To be sure, German villages by no means lacked internal conflict and social strife. Indeed, in many villages of Hesse, as in other German regions that have been put to close historical scrutiny, social differentiation increased massively until the Thirty Years’ War. In many regions, such change pitted wealthy peasants against poor cottagers. It prompted village elites to ally themselves with the control of marriage by the new Reformation courts.14 But such strife did not translate into the emergence of mutually hostile popular cultures that were able to realign social relations at the local level along loyalties beyond the local community. In what follows, these different paths of the interaction of the social control of local communities and the social control as enforced by church and state will be pursued with regard to Essex and Hesse.

The Hessian Anabaptists

In 1526, when Prince Philip of Hesse invited noblemen, clergy, and urban representatives to discuss the reformation of the Church in his lands, the Reformation in Germany was well under way. Its message had been spread by broadsheets to the common men, beyond the control of either state or church. By the end of the Peasant War in 1525, most nobles, princes, and town patriciates were convinced that the course of change had to be put into the hands of the magistrates.15 Against this background, the maintenance of order was of overriding importance to noblemen and urban citizens alike. In 1526, Prince Philip presented to his vassals as well as to his urban subjects a plan for the reformation of
the Church, based on the scheme of the French humanist François Lambert from Avignon. According to that scheme, the Church was to become a self-sustained body running its own affairs.\textsuperscript{16}

By the 1530s, that scheme had catastrophically failed. With the disciplinary muscle of the state seemingly gone, many parishioners alienated church lands, refused to pay tithes, and ceased to attend services. In particular the pious among the population began to flock to the Anabaptist preachers, who pointed out the very real decay of the official Church. By 1534, when the Anabaptist kingdom of Munster had become a serious menace to the political, social, and religious order, Anabaptism began to be viewed as a real threat to the social and political order in Hesse as well. Whatever Hessian Anabaptists actually wanted or believed, the Hessian state had no option but to prosecute them.

Just as other Anabaptist groups, Hessian Anabaptists had no clear or uniform religious and political program let alone wish to threaten the social or political order. Where possible, they were even willing to push the authorities into a course of pious reform.\textsuperscript{17} What Hessian Anabaptism was mainly about was an uncompromising critique of the practices of the visible Hessian church and the behavior of its membership. Unable to press for reform, they were thus ready to separate from their neighbors. While many Anabaptists still cooperated with their neighbors in many respects, they were not willing to share with them their religious life. Whereas some of the aims of Hessian Anabaptists were rooted in general grievances of the population at large,\textsuperscript{18} they shared, as Gottfried Seebaß has recently reminded us, a deep dissatisfaction with church reform as it had been accomplished by state and official church.\textsuperscript{19}

A typical example is the journeyman Velten Raumeissen. He had helped neighbors build a house during the summer of 1529. One of the other laborers, Otto Haunmöller, told him during this time about the punishment of the Lord that would be inflicted in due course. All would be damned that still adhered to the old faith. In particular those who had been baptized as infants but had failed to renew their covenant with God through adult baptism faced damnation. Raumeissen later explained, when questioned, that these prospects had frightened him and had prompted him to agree to a new christening. After that event Heinmöller warned him to stay away from the worldly pursuits of his neighbors, friends, and kin. He told him he must not attend church service with the rest of the parishioners and not join his friends for drinking parties at infant baptisms but instead had to live in his house on his own and pursue a pious life. Velten objected that he could not earn a living by keeping himself apart from his neighbors, but his teacher told him not to worry, to lead a pious life and avoid the contagion of his damned neighbors. Handed over to the authorities and questioned by them, Velten now begged to be allowed to go back to his family. He wished to return to the true Church and remain an obedient subject ever after. Moreover, he intended to warn others against the dangers of the “devilish sect.”\textsuperscript{20}
Like other members of the Reformation’s “left wing,” the Hessian Anabaptists were not content with the reform of doctrine alone but aimed at a reform of life. They blamed the magistrates’ Reformation, like the one put into practice by Prince Philip and his advisors, to have reformed at best the doctrine of the Church, not life in the parishes. To them, the life of their neighbors remained unreformed and embedded in sin. In order to establish a true church, these neighbors had to be purged of their sins. Wherever possible, Anabaptists sought to enlist the authorities to that end.21 Recent research on Anabaptism has shown that the separation of Anabaptists from their neighbors was not part of their original program but only a consequence of the failure of their quest for pious reform.22

Without the active support of pious noblemen and gentry, godly minorities in the towns and countryside of England would hardly have been able to enforce the Reformation of Manners on their neighbors. In Germany, however, the Anabaptists had been identified as dangerous to the order of church and state from an early date. Moreover, their refusal to take part in the social activities of the rest of the community, in particular when associated with drinking, met with suspicion from their neighbors.23 Whereas in many other towns and territories prosecution remained the only response to this perceived threat, Philip summoned support from Martin Bucer to persuade arrested Anabaptists to return to the official Church. In particular during the 1530s, leading Hessian Anabaptists were interrogated in Marburg. While Bucer left no doubt that there was no alternative to reentering the official Church, he did listen to the complaints of Anabaptist leaders.24 How could the authorities expect pious people to join a church whose members lived their life as unreformed and sinful as the majority of Hessian subjects? The direct result of these negotiations was, first, the return of many Anabaptists into the official Church. Second, a synod assembled at Ziegenhain in 1538 agreed to the Ziegenhain order, which was meant to enforce godly discipline in the parishes. According to that order, the pious of each parish should be recruited as elders. Together with the minister, these elders were to admonish the sinful, remind them of their duties toward the Lord, and make sure that only those who had truly repented of their sins took part in the Lord’s supper.25

The Ziegenhain order became a source of protracted conflict between various segments of local society. On the whole, a new popular culture emerged that took up some parts of the new faith but also defended older forms of sociability. Most Anabaptists kept resenting this culture as sinful. The minister at Homberg explicitly warned his flock to stay away from that culture.26 Indeed, most Hessian Anabaptists were pious people who deeply resented the way of life of their neighbors and feared their own damnation, should they fail to separate from them.27 Adam Angersbach had heard how the Hessian Anabaptist leader Melchior Rinck reminded everyone of Christ’s words “from their fruits they will be recognized, those false teachers . . . Since then he had lived a good life and refrained from swearing, gluttony, drinking and other sins, and, according to his best knowledge,
baptism was a covenant between Christ and those people who start a new life and intend to abstain from sin.” Few of the imprisoned Hessian Anabaptists actually resisted the order of church and state. Some, like Georg Schnabel, actually quoted the standard textbook of the Hessian advisor Johannes Ferrarius on the pious state and stressed their willingness to defend such a godly commonwealth. However, it remained plain to them that church and state had utterly failed to live up to their task of reforming the citizens. For example, Georg Schnabel complained that the state of the Church was worse than among the followers of the pope. In fact, the opinion of these Anabaptists paralleled the impression of the official Hessian clergy, who throughout the sixteenth century deplored the sinfulness among ordinary parishioners.

Sociability and Social Control

The decision of many Anabaptists, such as Adam Angersbach, to withdraw from the life of “feasting, drinking and other sins” of his neighbors also implied a withdrawal from the communal mechanisms of social control and cohesion. Despite church ordinances to the contrary, Hessian local communities vigorously defended their custom of celebrating marriages and baptisms with drinking parties that might last several days. Local town councilors and village headmen refused to prosecute participants. Throughout the 1540s, for example, the Marburg town council obstructed any implementation of the Ziegenhain order of discipline. When questioned by Prince Philip’s regional representative, they said they would be willing to act in cases of public vice, but the punishment of drinking, in particular during marriages, was unnecessary and overdone. The town council even sought to protect local beer brewing, and hence local beer consumption, in order to provide employment to the local poor. Similarly, local authorities in Essex defended the practice of brewing against its condemnation by a Puritan preacher with the argument that the poor must have work. As in Essex, the Marburg town council, after considering the pious concerns of hotter Protestants in the community, concluded that piety was good, but that social cohesion and employment for the poor were equally important. The Marburg council explicitly stated that the maintenance of civil unity demanded that Marburg citizens should, in the past as in the future, brew their own beer and sell it on their premises.

Under pressure from the clergy, pious citizens, and the prince’s representative, the council finally agreed to limit disorder during weddings and to restrict drinking and dancing strictly to those persons actually invited for the ceremony in question. But as late as 1543 the representative of the prince complained about public disorder, about public drinking, and running and screaming in the streets without any interference from the local council. Again, the town council defended these customs, openly refusing to arrest Marburg citizens for drink-
ing and screaming in taverns and the streets and even trying to persuade their superior to release some Marburgers who had already been arrested. The council repeatedly attempted to negotiate longer time periods for celebrations at marriages and baptisms than specified in the Ziegenhain order. In sum, it attempted to prevent the full implementation of that order in Marburg, with its concomitant effect on the city’s popular culture. In 1548, after nearly a decade of evasive reactions, the town council finally declared the Ziegenhain order to be repulsive and unacceptable for the town, because it violated local wedding customs.

Marburg did not stand alone. At least until the 1590s, the town of Hersfeld defended its local custom of celebrating weddings with meals during several days. From the 1530s on, this town had been a major center of Anabaptism. The impious behavior of the large majority of the Hersfeld inhabitants made recruitment among the pious minority particularly successful. The majority, however, retaliated. As late as 1577 some of the inhabitants were handed over to the authorities as Anabaptists.

The resistance of citizens and town councilors in Marburg and Hersfeld cannot simply be interpreted as part of a struggle between local popular culture on the one hand and the early modern state and its church on the other hand. It must be understood as a conflict among different segments of local populations over the meaning of piety and the necessary means to establish good order in church and state. The majority of Hessian subjects resented any implementation of the Ziegenhain order, and they despised those among their neighbors who refused to take part in common pastimes. Anabaptists withdrew from a number of common activities that forged community, including services in the local church and common pastimes during weddings and infant baptisms. Some of them, like Doll Franck, were explicitly warned by fellow Anabaptists not to participate in the secular and ecclesiastical affairs of their neighbors and to abstain from swearing and drinking. To be sure, in large towns such as Marburg, some local citizens were willing to petition on behalf of arrested Anabaptists, arguing that, after all, they were only pious folk who should not be prosecuted. The Anabaptist leader Georg Schnabel was allowed to escape from prison in 1538 to enable him to see his family. Likewise, arrested Anabaptists in Wolkersdorf were released by local officials who shared some of their critical views toward the visible church.

In general, however, Anabaptists found shelter in their kinship networks, which provided protection and loyalty. Outside those networks, they had to reckon with outspoken hostility from their neighbors. Anabaptists even developed secret signs to communicate with each other in local environments they perceived as largely hostile. A member of the Oswald family, accused of Anabaptism in 1539, later recounted how his neighbors had actively urged the authorities to prosecute him; with that accomplished, they had harassed his relatives and robbed
them of their property, so that they had to flee the region. At Neumorschen, ordinary neighbors informed the authorities about anyone who suspiciously avoided the Lord’s Supper. In the Sorge area, a center of Anabaptism in East Hesse, local people were ready to actively support prosecution. Although ordinary villagers often were prepared to tolerate the strange ways of their pious neighbors for a while, without sharing their sense of piety, pressures from the local environment, such as the threat of exclusion from communion, forced even these tolerant persons to take sides. In 1575, when it was publicly announced from the pulpit that the intended marriage of the daughter of a Treysa Anabaptist was refused, she declared in the presence of her father, the whole parish, and the minister that she would henceforth abstain from her father’s errors.

In particular, the refusal to baptize infants led to an intense hostility among neighbors. Shortly after the wife of the notorious Anabaptist Valentin Merten from Breitsbach had given birth to a child, her neighbors told the local justice at Vacha that the child, who had died, had not been “Christened.” Merten, they alleged, had refused to baptize his child. Obviously, the neighbors had tolerated the strange ways of this adult couple, but they insisted on a proper baptism for the newborn child and informed the relevant authorities when the parents themselves failed to make this happen. Villagers thus enforced compliance with their norms, both within the realm of local social control by informal means and through enlisting the apparatus of the state for support. Local popular culture and the state reinforced each other here. The justice first questioned the midwives who had been present during the mother’s labors. The midwives reported the birth of twins, one stillborn and the other dead a day later. Merten had been present during labor and had explicitly ruled out the baptism of his children. The midwives further told the justice that the whole community now worried for Merten’s wife, who might die as well. Moreover, there was something suspicious, they alleged, about the child who had been born alive. First, it was not so weak or ill at the time of birth to warrant a premature death. Second, it had lost strange liquids from its nose when it died.

Anabaptist Merten had clearly tested the tolerance of his neighbors to breaking point when he refused to baptize his child. While they had allowed him to pursue his own way of piety, midwives and neighbors turned into participants of popular culture of social control once baptism did not take place. They sought at least to protect his wife and attempted to explain the death of the children from the perspective of their own piety, which stressed the utter importance of child baptism. At other occasions, Anabaptists were even denounced to the authorities merely for failing to attend service. In such cases, burgomasters, town council, citizens, and villagers acted together and in accordance with the officials of the prince to detect secret meetings. The defense of certain aspects of local popular culture, such as drinking and swearing, by no means precluded active cooperation with the authorities to defend a godly order.
Given this state of affairs between Anabaptists and their neighbors, it cannot come as a surprise that villagers and townsmen were outraged when Hessian clergymen told them they were worse than the Anabaptists. In one case, the minister of Homberg had criticized the hunting and court life of princes and nobility in a fashion quite typical for sixteenth-century court critique. But more than that, he had vigorously attacked participation in carnival and had accused local participants of allying themselves with the devil. He had even refused to take part in the burial of one town councilor, whom he had accused of an impious life.54 The Homberg parishioners, led by their councilors, now turned to the supralocal authorities. In their attempt to enlist support from church and state, they portrayed their minister as a dangerous rebel, who tried to induce loyal subjects into rebellion by criticizing court life. When questioned, they had to admit that their minister had only warned them of the seditious behavior of Anabaptists, rather than inciting them toward revolt. But they insisted he had excluded parishioners from the Lord’s Supper. According to the Ziegenhain order of discipline, that was one of his tasks indeed.55 Yet, he had to leave Homberg after a while, because his position had become untenable. The inhabitants of Homberg had successfully defended their new popular culture that included traditional forms of sociability. The state had proved unable to enforce the “true morality” the Ziegenhain order was supposed to maintain, because its attempts at enforcement lacked substantial local support.

**English Rural Communities: The Historical Debate**

Beggars, the Puritan divine William Perkins wrote, are for the most part a cursed group. “They joyne not themselves to any setled congregation for the obtaining of God’s kingdome, and so this promise belongs not to them.”56 Puritan preachers reminded assize juries of their duty to regulate moral behavior.57 Statements like the one Perkins made led historians, in particular during the 1970s and 1980s, to discuss the Puritan Reformation of Manners in terms of social control.58 At least since Christopher Hill’s *Society and Puritanism in Prerevolutionary England*, research has focused on three related issues: the “cause of preachers, religious publicists and social controllers” during England’s Second Reformation; the doubling of England’s population from about the mid-sixteenth until the mid-seventeenth century; and the effect this increase in population had on the social structure and on social relations.59 When considering these developments, in particular, the historiography of the 1970s not only assumed an increase in tensions between rich and poor but also used this assumption to explain changes in piety, church discipline, and lay concerns for order. All developments together were interpreted in terms of a society that increasingly lacked solidarity and became divided into the world of the illiterate poor and that of a literate elite.60
Keith Wrightson and David Levine provided empirical evidence for such assertions in a case study of the village of Terling. There, population growth indeed led to an enormous increase in the number of the local poor, while denunciations of neighbors before the Church courts reflected the desire of some members of local society to regulate the behavior of others. These activities matched the effort of the Puritan divine Richard Hooker and several of the local yeomen families to purge the village of sinful behavior. Thus, Wrightson and Levine’s study seemed to confirm the thesis of a cultural conflict between the laboring poor on the one hand and the better sort, in alliance with local Puritans, on the other hand.61

Three assumptions proved to be vital to this argument. First, piety was understood to have functions beyond the realm of religion. Without doubting the sincerity of each individual’s belief, historians assumed that Puritan piety gained in acceptance because it served to explain a world in disarray and suggested appropriate patterns of behavior. Second, Wrightson and Levine distinguished between defensive purposes, such as the regulation of sexual behavior by the Church courts, and offensive purposes, that is, “to promote new standards of behavior” in using the courts to discipline local inhabitants.62 They mainly focused on the offensive purposes, supposedly motivated by the Puritan Reformation of Manners and consisting of campaigns against alehouses, strict enforcement of the Sabbath, and attacks on popular customs such as dancing at maypoles and watching bear baiting. Third, the kind of culture this group of hotter Protestants was trying to impose on local society leaned heavily toward the literate section of the population. Its strong sense of iconophobia and its reliance on Scripture necessarily excluded the illiterate.63 Thus, the affluent within local society were especially prone to be attracted to the piety of Puritan ministers like Hooker and Shepard. The faithful few in each community saw themselves as a minority among their neighbors anyway.64 For both religious and social reasons, the exclusion of the poor from their midst convinced the elites that the poor did not belong to the “invisible church” in the first place, and this stiffened their attitude toward the “rude multitude,” that “many-headed monster.”65

A debate among historians ensued, which questioned precisely the three assumptions made by Wrightson and Levine. Thus, Margaret Spufford claimed that Nonconformist piety, including Puritan piety, was widespread across all strata of the English population, rather than confined to the higher echelons of the social order. She stressed that, also among the poorer sort, many were able to read and write, while nonwritten forms of communicating religious beliefs integrated even the semiliterate into pious networks. Communication networks, of street pedlars and family traditions, for example, accounted for the spread of piety, not social class.66 It is disputable, however, whether Spufford’s evidence really points at equal proportions of the pious among all social groups, so that the notion of the social exclusiveness of certain forms of piety is not as weakened as Spufford
claims. Nevertheless, it is no longer possible to draw a clear line between the pious better sort and an unbelieving poorer sort; this distinction has to be established in each individual case when it can be proven.

Second, both Martin Ingram and Margaret Spufford, while observing a concern for order involving defensive as well as offensive denunciations within the Church courts, note that these were unconnected with piety in general and Puritanism in particular. Spufford compares efforts to control population growth and to suppress customs considered disorderly in the early-fourteenth century with similar campaigns in the late-sixteenth century. Ingram shows that efforts to control population growth and disorder in Wiltshire in the late-sixteenth century were not motivated by a Puritan Reformation of Manners. Moreover, efforts to discipline neighbors in the Essex Hundred of Havering (Administrative Unit near London, County Essex) in the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries—a period generally acknowledged to be relatively free of social crisis—cast doubt on the thesis of a connection between the incidence of social crisis, real or perceived, and waves of social control at the local level. Finally, both Spufford and Patrick Collinson remain skeptical about a functional interpretation of piety and insist upon explaining religious beliefs in their own terms.

In a later study of the Hundred of Havering during the years 1500–1620, Marjorie MacIntosh dealt with a whole range of measures by courts and local officials that she summarized under the heading of social control. It reflected the current state of debate on the issue. To her, the regulation of marriage, the enforcement of regular church attendance, and the battle against premarital sexual intercourse, all by the ecclesiastical courts, made up the contemporary effort at social control. None of its three elements was particularly associated with the Puritan Reformation of Manners; they had gradually come into existence since the late-fifteenth century. Moreover, the very institution that exercised this social control tried desperately to keep a Puritan schoolteacher from preaching in his home. Social control and the specific impact of England's Second Reformation and the conflicts stemming from it were clearly separated. The Puritan complaint literature may have attempted to profit from a widespread perception of social crisis to hammer its case home, but neither the Reformation of Manners nor the piety of evangelical Protestantism were the consequence of a crisis.

Social Control and the Poor

The work of Ingram, Houlbrooke, Spufford, and McIntosh leads to a definite conclusion. First, Wrightson and Levine's "defensive motive" was involved in a higher proportion of cases handled by the Church courts than Wrightson and Levine themselves had thought. Second, they overestimated the role of Puritan piety in inducing people to denounce offenders to these courts. Instead, we observe
a traditional concern for establishing order, limiting population growth, enforcing regular church attendance, and suppressing those popular pastimes identified as potential sources of disorder. This traditional concern existed independently from the cultural impact of the Reformation in England, and it can be traced back to an earlier period, possibly as early as the fourteenth century. Admittedly, a part of the concern for order was necessarily directed at the poor: the control of vagrancy, for example, or the prevention of building unauthorized cottages. But this is far from saying that the traditional concern for order, let alone the Reformation of Manners, was primarily aimed at the poor.

In the village of Earls Colne, which had become polarized between a mass of landless weavers and laborers and a few yeomen and gentlemen, the relatively low geographic mobility of the poor allows us to identify the social status of the villagers appearing in the Church courts. Despite growing problems with poor immigrants, with wood theft, and the construction of unauthorized dwellings, the local poor were not overrepresented among any category of offenders these courts dealt with. Perhaps this comes as no surprise in the case of the group accused of premarital intercourse. However, also among those accused of absence from church, drunkenness, swearing, and playing football at Easter, all social strata were represented. The common element rather was their age group, most of them being in their early to late twenties. Moreover, evidence on the biography of the offenders, even of multiple offenders, does not hint at a polarization between two cultures of personal conduct. Even the small group of recidivists turned into respectable members of local society when they married, serving as jurors and churchwardens. Admittedly, the office of constable was monopolized by local yeomen families from the early-seventeenth century, but members of yeomen families who had been prosecuted for drunkenness or swearing were excluded from it. Despite the emergence of a rigid social hierarchy in the village, with little mobility between classes, the Church courts were primarily concerned with the young and unmarried, irrespective of class.

Moreover, the Reformation of Manners in the village, championed by the Puritan divine Thomas Shepard and led by the local squirearchal family, was opposed primarily by yeomen and husbandmen who had been living there since the early-sixteenth century. These families had experienced the resident squire’s predecessor, and they viewed the massive increase in entry fines (fines to be allowed to “entry” possession of a piece of rented land) by the new squires with dismay. It is perhaps dangerous to make a too sharp distinction between the traditional concern for order and the cultural and disciplinary impact of the Reformation of Manners. First, the court of the archdeacon of Colchester not only proceeded against unmarried persons for pregnancy but also prosecuted to an increasing extent couples already married for premarital pregnancy. In due course, the number of such cases nearly equaled that of unmarried persons. Most of the couples involved were relatively well off. There seems to have been no appar-
ent reason to fear that their children would burden local poor law resources. The archdeacon who initiated this change of policy, George Wyrthers, was a committed partisan of the Puritan Reformation of Manners. He had preached against images on church windows at Cambridge in 1565. In his doctoral thesis, submitted to the theological faculty at Heidelberg in 1568, he emphasized the right of the Presbyterian Church to proceed even against the monarch in matters of church discipline. Then Archbishop Grindal recruited him, making him archdeacon of Colchester in 1570, where he stayed until his death in 1617. By prosecuting married couples, he added a novel element to the traditional concern for population control and premarital intercourse.

Despite these considerations, on the whole a distinction can be made between the impact of the Puritan Reformation of Manners and an older, traditional concern for order. We can draw the line most easily in cases where this concern for order and the Reformation of Manners were in conflict. While Puritan preachers demanded an attack on alehouses, the responsible justices of the peace might grant licenses to serve drinks, in order to provide poor men with a living. Despite their loyalty to the Puritan cause, the Puritan squires of Earls Colne licensed alehouses during a slump in the cloth trade. Some contemporaries even denounced the Reformation of Manners for destroying communal pastimes that had served to unite the local community and increase its internal cohesion. Similarly, urban magistrates in Hesse vigorously defended the brewing of beer as part of the income of the local poor, even if that meant to allow for a certain amount of drinking during pastimes.

Later on, efforts to revive or defend such pastimes were stigmatized as Arminian, in the context of a confrontation that was evolving since the 1570s and 1580s. In the contest over Arminianism we can see the divergence between two types of social control most clearly. The traditional concern for order was broadly shared by the strata responsible for it. They enforced order through the official apparatus of the Tudor and Stuart regimes, and this was no issue of debate in the political arena. To that extent, social control was exercised from the top down. This was quite different from the Puritan Reformation of Manners, whose influence over the English church and population is still an issue of debate.

After the establishment of the Reformation in England and its consolidation from 1559 on, the cause of evangelical Protestants urging for a Second Reformation became less popular. They were only partially successful in enlisting the ordinary sinews of power for their cause, because other, competing strands of Protestant belief existed from the beginning. Despite this lack of a whole-hearted or unilateral support from England’s leading elite, evangelical Protestantism was able to exert enough influence to cause, as Ronald Hutton concludes, the decline in lay pastimes during the second half of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. Either in spite of this one success or due to it, evangelical Protestantism was never accepted by the whole political nation.
Instead, it contributed to the “dynamic and mutual antagonism” with English Protestantism. The social control that evangelical Protestantism attempted to exercise, therefore, never succeeded in becoming fully an instrument of the existing order. Instead, it became involved in the struggle between two “startlingly different moral economies” within the Church of England and between two different popular cultures, each defending its own moral economy against the other.89 Thus, the struggles within the Church of England and its ministry about the true meaning of church and piety were transmitted, through the Church courts, to local religious factions.90 These debates among theologians gave religious meaning to factional and social strife in the myriads of local petty conflicts that, since the 1580s, were becoming the “English Wars of Religion.”91

The lack of consensus limited the effectiveness of social control by the Puritan reformers. Their efforts rather contributed to the destruction of communal life wherever two local factions chose to align themselves with the opposing sides in the religious struggle. The attack on lay pastimes destroyed precisely that part of customary communal life that had, to some degree, helped local society to overcome its many internal divisions.92 Moreover, the Puritan set of beliefs often put an unprecedented focus on otherwise widely dispersed conflicts, providing opponents an additional reason for quarreling. Many local examples confirm this.

In Earls Colne, for example, part of the Essex-Suffolk cloth belt, some manors were taken by the Harlakenden family from the DeVere family, Earls of Oxford, in 1583. From then until 1592, the DeVeres fought a legal battle to regain what they still considered their property. In order to assert their ownership of the manors and all rights associated with it, including ecclesiastical appointments, the Harlakendens wanted to replace a DeVere vicar. In the Church court, they accused him and his wardens of letting pigs into the churchyard, of administering two cures, and of failing to denounce villagers who had allegedly been playing football at Easter. The archdeacon who handled the case, a committed Calvinist, believed the accusations and replaced the vicar. This was merely the start of a local feud that continued until after the Civil War. Several yeomen families, who had watched with dismay the massive increase in entry fines under the Harlakendens, disturbed the services of the new vicar from the outset and kept on participating in Easter football. In retaliation, the Harlakendens excluded the members of these families from the office of constable. While they successfully banned Sunday drinking from the village center to the periphery of the parish boundaries, neither the Harlakendens nor their pious followers among the leading yeomen could force the local opposition into complete surrender. Members of the very families who had been opposing the Harlakendens, their vicars, and the transformation of local life since the 1590s backed local Quakers in their refusal to pay tithes during the 1650s.93

While this feud went on, the archdeacons of Colchester, whether they embraced Puritanism or criticized it, continued to prosecute absence from church,
drunkenness, defamation, and above all, premarital intercourse. For their part, the Earls Colne churchwardens and constables chased pigs from the churchyard and drunkards and football players from the village, with or without church support. Since most of the churchwardens and all the constables were substantial local yeomen, while the ordinary drunkard was, like most of his neighbors, poor and landless, the new reformed discipline was indeed exercised by the better sort against the poor. Nevertheless, the main effect of the Puritan Reformation of Manners was an intensification of local factional strife to unprecedented heights. Throughout England, especially in the home counties (the area surrounding London), the shift in the aims and means of social control envisioned by godly people divided local societies. Two mutually hostile popular cultures emerged, with divergent views about the nature of ecclesiastical discipline and the face of social control.

Conclusion

Hesse and Essex constitute two examples of a vigorous campaign for a fundamental reform of doctrine and life, of the Church and individual conduct, and of morality in civil and ecclesiastical affairs. Local societies and local customs changed in both cases. By the later-seventeenth century, local popular cultures had been transformed. However, whereas the Church and local society had found a new equilibrium in Hesse, in Essex two hostile popular cultures had emerged.

During these transformations, who was controlling whom? No doubt, both in Essex and Hesse, local communities attempted to enforce a vigorous social control among neighbors. The more neighbors depended on each other in everyday life, the more social control became inevitable. Thus, the Reformation did not introduce social control into popular cultures from which it had been absent before. The reformed program sought to replace some forms of social control with others. The new forms, like the older ones, were in line with current views of piety and how to achieve salvation. Neither in Essex nor in Hesse, however, did an undisputed consensus prevail among the population on these crucial issues. Indeed, widely diverging ideas concerning them existed even within the emerging Protestant church of Hesse, let alone in the Church of England. The events in Hesse and Essex amounted to local struggles over the meaning of piety, which directly affected the means of social control and were embedded in a specific framework of political and religious change. The outcome of the reformation of doctrine and life, however, was very different in Hesse and Essex. Whereas significant sections of local society in many Essex towns and villages embraced Puritan piety and collaborated with Puritan ministers and gentry to reform the manners of their neighbors, the overwhelming majority of Hessian villagers and townsmen, while accepting the reformation of doctrine, successfully defended a wide
array of local customs. Only in the Essex countryside, therefore, did two different popular cultures emerge: the pious one of the hotter sort of Protestants and that of popular pastimes.

In Hesse, zealous villagers were not numerous enough to put pressure on their neighbors, or they had become Anabaptists. For reasons outside the principality, cooperation between these individuals and the institutions of church and state remained impossible. The compromise reached in the later 1530s, which prompted most Anabaptist leaders to return to the official Church and resulted in the Ziegenhain order of discipline, was an exception in Protestant Germany, not the rule. The establishment of a unified church at the territorial level precluded the toleration of pious groups outside it. Consequently, the Church had to be content with the piety of ordinary men and women. It had to accommodate traditional popular culture to some extent. By the later-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, the result of this accommodation was the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline at the local level. As late as the 1730s, however, the disciplinary effort faced drinking, swearing, and popular pastimes as integral parts of a rural popular culture shared by committed Hessian Protestants. The Reformation had finally led to nationally specific pathways concerning the relation of popular culture to the sinews of state and church.

Notes

I would like to thank Patrick Collinson, Martin Brecht, and Pieter Spierenburg for commenting on earlier versions of this article.

1. Repgen, Ferdinand III, 319–43.
2. Wunder, “Justitia, Teutonica Fromkeyt,” 307–32. On the meaning of civil life and civil order as informed by Lutheran doctrine and laid down in the Confessio Augustana, see Liebig, Confessio Augustana.
5. Ingram, Puritans and the Church Courts 1560–1640, 58–91, also see 72–75; idem, “Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England.”
7. Scribner, For the Sake of Simple Folk; Robisheaux, Rural Society; Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village; Spufford, Contrasting Communities; Collinson, Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism, 32–57; see notes 57–93 for more complete references.
8. Lenman and Parker, “The State, the Community and the Criminal Law in Early Modern Europe,” 11–42.
9. Sohm, Territorium und Kirche in der hessischen Reformation, 130. See for recent assessments of the Anabaptists, synthesizing research, and also emphasizing the will-
ingness of Anabaptists to enlist lay authorities for the course of pious reform and their separation as a result of their frustration with the official church: Seebaß, Der “linke Flügel der Reformation,” 151–64; Goertz, Die Täufer, 144–57.

12. Ingram, “Puritans and the Church Courts,” 81–82.
17. Stayer, Anabaptists and the Sword, 201: “Among the scattered, persecuted, and badly instructed congregations arose expressions of every possible standpoint on Sword and Covenant”; Oyer, Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists, 97: “Clearly [central German] Anabaptism presented no unified set of ideas on the Christian’s attitude toward the civil order. The disunity can probably be attributed to insufficient instruction and the all pervasive influence of the Peasant’s War among the lower classes from which Anabaptism drew much of its membership.”
19. Seebaß, Der “linke Flügel der Reformation,” 153–54. On the development of debate see Stupperisch, Melanchthon und die Täufer, 150–69; Maurer, Luther und die Schwärmer, 103–33; Bergsten, Balthasar Hubmaier, 13–54; Stayer, Anabaptists, xii–xiv; idem, Luther und die Schwärmer, 269–88; Goertz, Die Täufer, 144–57.
21. Seebaß, Der “linke Flügel der Reformation,” 158.
22. Stayer, Anabaptism, xiii; Goertz, Die Täufer, 11–27, 144–57.
24. See on Martin Bucer and the Marburg negotiations with Anabaptists, in particular with the Anabaptist leaders Schnabel and Tesch: Greschat, Martin Bucer, 164–66; Joisten, Der Grenzgänger Martin Bucer, 116; Münch, Zucht und Ordnung, 111–13; Stupperich, Schriften von evangelischer Seite gegen die Täufer, 5.
27. Franz 4, 3 no. 10 B; see as well 29, no. 11.
29. Franz 4, 175, no. 63. He used Ferrarius to explain that his attack on usury was lawful. See also Georg Schnabel, “Verantwortung und Widerlegung,” in Franz 4, 170. But see his earlier comments 75, no. 30, where he refused to wage war. See on this: Weiß, “Herkunft und Sozialanschauungen,” 162–89, in particular 171–86, on the teachings of Tesch and Schnabel.


32. Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village.

33. “Es ist, um bürgerlich einigkeit zu halten, vor nutz und gut angesehen, dos ein ieder sein bier, er habs legen, wo er wolle in seinem huse, da er gesessen, verschenken sol”: Küch 1, 330, no. 253. On the struggle of the Marburg council against competition from brewers outside town, see Küch 1, 353, no. 257.

34. Küch 1, 340, no. 262.

35. Ibid.

36. Küch 1, 341, no. 265.

37. Küch 1, 342–44, no. 266.

38. Küch 1, 375, no. 283.


40. StAM 17 I no. 5125; see as well Franz 4, 387, no. 169.

41. Franz 4, 25.

42. He was told “das er zu kainer Gesellschaft solt gehen, dann die Welt wer boss, mit essen, trinken, fluchen, schweren und dergleichen”: Franz 4, 23.

43. The petition was written on behalf of Anabaptist leader Hermann Bastian; see Franz 4, 199.

44. See Franz 4, 190, no. 65, report on the flight of Georg Schnabel.


47. Sohm, Territorium und Reformation, 191.

48. Franz 4, 49, no. 18a.

49. Sohm, Territorium und Reformation, 131.


52. Franz 4, 147, no. 49.
53. See for instance Franz 4, 150, no. 51.
54. He had them “hesslich geschulten, sie seien alle des Teufels” and had said “Es sei kein statt im fürstentum hessen, da mehr leut in seien, die dem evangelio zuwieder sein, als alhier zu Homberg, die von Homberg sind erger dan die Wiedertäufer,” Franz 4, 226, 297.
55. Ibid., 228.
58. Wrightson, “Two Concepts of Order.”
60. See Hutton, The Rise and Fall of Merry England, 244–46.
61. Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village.
62. Ibid., 140.
63. Collinson, Iconoclasm, 4–7; Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order.
66. Spufford, Contrasting Communities; idem, Small Books and Pleasant Histories; idem, The Importance of Religion.
67. Spufford, The Importance of Religion, 20, claims for instance that 34 percent of 90 Quakers of a Buckinghamshire Meeting were laborers or poor husbandmen. Given that in some regions laborers and poor husbandmen amounted to three-quarters and more of the total number of heads of households, a proportion of only 34 percent might indeed hint toward an underrepresentation of the poorer sort among these dissenters.
70. McIntosh, A Community Transformed, 240–50. See also Houlebrooke, Church Courts and the People, 55–75, on the importance of the punishment for incontinence for English ecclesiastical jurisdiction.
71. In addition to the titles already mentioned: Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage.
72. Spufford, “Puritanism and Social Control,” 51–53, suggests that even the prosecution of Sabbath breaking, dancing, ales, dice playing, illegitimacy, and incontinency
before marriage could be features of late and high Medieval church discipline. Recently, this argument has been reinforced by McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England*.


80. On this distinction see Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village*, 140.


84. Penry, *The Tudor Regime*; Hutton, *Merry England*, 72–110. Given the character of the Elizabethan regime, some kind of consensus at least among a comfortable majority of the political nation was in some way inevitable to succeed in politics; see Collinson, *The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I*, 394–424.


93. Friedeburg, “Reformation of Manners.”

94. Friedeburg, “The Public of Confessional Identity.”