Who were the “Puritans”? The short answer is, a party within the two state churches (Scotland and England) dissatisfied with anything short of a “thorough” or “perfect” Protestantism that eliminated every trace of “idolatry,” curtailed the authority of the monarchy in matters of religion, and set a high standard for being a “sincere” Christian. A hard-fought politics unfolded, but it was the political collapse of Charles I in 1640-41 that enabled Puritans in both countries to come into power—only to discover that they disagreed on matters as fundamental as the nature of the true church. The New England colonists inherited these issues but resolved them in ways that continually surprise us.