To the casual observer, the crystals appear to be inert lumps of quartz, roughly shaped. But to the seventeenth-century individuals who placed them in the corners of their new building at Magunkaquog in the heart of their homeland, they were hope and insurance for the future, connection to the past, and an active shaping of their present. The crystals not only expressed the intent to continue The People’s place in the land that was theirs, to sink deep into the earth in the face of all the changes that followed on the heels of the Coat-men who had invaded it—often clumsily yet so destructively—they were one means by which to accomplish that goal. By the time The People buried the crystals beneath where they would gather to join in words and song in ways their ancestors had not known, they knew the Coat-men called themselves English and that their new way to reach other-than-human persons was called being a Christian. They had come to live in this place to be with their kin and others who had lost much so that together they could practice the new forms of interaction with the unseen members of their community. When Daniel Gookin, the puritan missionary and superintendent of Indian affairs for the colony of Massachusetts, came to encourage them in 1674, they gave the entire building over to his use during his visit. He prayed with them, briefly joining with them as one of their number. But most English living in what they called New England did not think that it was possible for Indians and English to be members of a congregation. Increasingly after the violence of the conflict the English came to call King Philip’s War (after the Pokanoket
The sachem who had tried to orchestrate alliances across long-standing tribal enmities, it seemed to English puritans that Natives could not be Christian, that something inherent made it impossible for them to incorporate into a body of Christ. Had Gookin known about the crystals beneath the floor as he led the community in prayer and exhorted them to strive to live a godly life, he might have doubted his firm conviction that they were Christian. The People did not; they knew that they were. And they continued to be, even after fifteen Natick Indians, inhabitants of another praying town, sold Magunkaquog lands to Harvard College.¹

Half an ocean away, Hannah Manena McKenney contemplated her future and the future of her family. Her husband, Anthony, had just bought her freedom as soon as he had finished his own indenture. They could try to stay in Bermuda as free people of color, to ensure that their children stayed out of entangling indentures. There were certainly some who did, deciding to take the risk that no one would try to make an issue of their freedom with the local justice, rather than to start over in a new place, far away from family and friends, that also held no guarantee of respect for their free status. Hannah did not relish that prospect. Although moving would mean leaving her parents and grandparents, it might also mean the chance to live in a community with fewer legal
obstacles. And Anthony had heard that there were other families like them, who looked like them, with whom they might worship without being confined to an area far from the pulpit.2

In many ways, the Nipmucs who lived at Magunkaquog and built the meetinghouse for the settlement and Hannah and Anthony McK- enney lived very different lives, but in certain key ways the challenges they confronted were part of the same context. The Nipmucs were in the territory that their people had held since time out of mind, while the McKenneys were only two or three generations removed from Europe and Africa. The McKenneys grew up fully enmeshed in an intimate sys- tem of racialized slavery in which only Bermudian Bermudians were free in any significant numbers. But for Natives who had to confront the competing spaces of colonial New England, the line of unfreedom was not so stark. Algonquian tribes were very much present and active, but individual Natives could not always remain free of debt indentures because of increasing colonial encroachment and attacks on their lands, goods (including livestock), and persons.

These variations were part of many larger contexts that scholars have so fruitfully researched and continue to investigate: the long-standing innovation and incorporation of outsiders (of whom Europeans were only the most recent) by the multitude of indigenous peoples of the Americas; the consolidation of power within many tribes in northeastern portions of North America; the growth of the transatlantic slave trade and forced African immigration to the Americas driven by European demand for labor; the increasing immigration of Europeans who by their very pres- ence invaded Native land. More recently, another context to which schol- ars have turned their attention is the interaction of race and religion in ideas about and practices of human difference in various parts of the early modern Atlantic world. In taking the religions of all seventeenth- century inhabitants seriously, this scholarship has added to our under- standing of how Native, African, and European peoples comprehended and accessed their worlds of the unseen.3

They have focused not on the parched and parsed distinctions of authoritative dogma but the practices and performances of lived reli- gion, of physical movements and textual presence. Those repeated practices connected the one to the many, sustaining multiple topog- raphies that outlined overlapping cultural places in a single space.4 The emphasis on practice has revealed the centrality of the body and bodies in colonial interactions. Embodied experience provided a com- mon origin point for human interpretation of the world, with specific
Figure I.2. The puritan Atlantic in the long seventeenth century.
explanations varying over time and among cultures. The four planes of the human body (front, back, and two sides) and the movement of the sun meant that many peoples have divided the world into four directions, although they varied in which one they designated as the principal direction. Although all humans comprehend the world through their physical bodies to create a common point of reference, the entire context for giving meaning to that reference, to those physical sensations, the naming of what an individual perceived and felt, was culturally dependent as well as being infinitely variable to each individual in a particular moment.5

This book is thus part of a growing scholarly conversation about the intersections of race, gender, religion, and the body in the Atlantic world. It also takes up the question of appropriate forms of narrative in interpreting the past, and of the fictions and violence that the archive visits on the lives of those millions whose names have been allowed to evaporate along with the breath that once spoke them. More concerned with an underlying ethos and the fluidity of religious practice than with specific and self-articulated connections between dissenting Protestants, this book’s framework of strongly puritan-influenced colonies takes a path that cuts across the topical boundaries that have often cordoned off sub-fields of the history of the early modern Atlantic: history of slavery and the slave trade, puritan studies, history and archaeology of northeastern Natives and of indigenous Caribbean peoples, and history of sexuality and the body.6

By peeling back the layers of conflicting definitions of bodies and competing practices of faith in the puritan Atlantic over a key period in the ideological attachment of inherited characteristics to particular skin tones, Faithful Bodies identifies local variations of that larger arc leading to the conflation of Christian and white and the concomitant overlap of Negro or Indian and heathen. Colonists’ perceptions of and interactions with indigenous peoples of the Americas and with West Central Africans shaped their definitions of ordered and disordered bodies to create local variations on transatlantic conversations about how to understand human difference and define its acceptable boundaries.7 While Virginian colonists developed a notion of Indians and Africans as no longer “potential Christians” who might eventually blend with English colonial society but rather as innately incompatible “hereditary heathens,” the debate unfolded rather differently in Bermuda and New England.8
English puritans in New England lagged behind Anglo-Virginians in conflating religion with skin color and defining Indians and Africans as categorically ineligible for membership in the body of Christ, while those in Bermuda created strong associations between freedom status and skin color but did not generally turn to Christianity as a differentiating factor. Although relative newcomers sometimes complained that slave owners in Bermuda did not make enough of an effort to convert the people they enslaved, generations of white Bermudians who had grown up alongside generations of Bermudians of color may simply have not seen the need to evangelize a group they considered to be within the Christian community. Many Bermudians of color claimed Christianity as their own even as they practiced and passed on some aspects of their generationally more distant ancestors’ religions. In New England, concentrated communities of Native Christians visibly contested the English circumscribing of “body of Christ” to fit along the lineaments of an English body. Most colonists after King Philip’s War (1675–76) did make the additional step of denying that those gathered communities were truly Christian, but some of the disdainful terminology in Virginia’s records—pagan, infidel, discussions of defilement from English bodily contact with Indians or Africans—was less present in New England’s records.

Bodies

A focus on embodiment and bodies enables a cross-confessional and cross-cultural exploration of seventeenth-century worldviews. The body of Christ is a central metaphor and entity that organizes Christian belief and practice. For Christians generally, Jesus Christ, the son of God, was and is simultaneously fully divine and fully human. Christ’s body as a historical human body was significant because it meant that he was fully human and truly suffered pain and death for the sins of all humanity. The body of Christ has also referred to the church, so that Christians are members of one body, the church. This metaphor of the body has carried multiple meanings at different historical moments because of its importance in Christian cosmology. Not only have people interpreted the body of Christ in various ways at different times and places, but they have had conflicting interpretations in the same time and place. The process of discerning these meanings is complex and does not end in neatly packaged answers, as the meanings themselves are often ambiguous. However, following these crisscrossing branches—much like following the path
of neurons in the brain—can lead to unexpected synapses, moments of connection between seemingly disparate elements. A more apt analogy for the seventeenth century is one concerning veins and the circulation of blood; following all the interpretations of the body of Christ moves us through all aspects of religious culture in the English Atlantic, a motion that itself is vital to the functioning of the whole body.

Interpretations of the body of Christ among religious thinkers in seventeenth-century Europe and the puritan Atlantic reveal how people thought about community in a way that intrinsically involved religion as well as cultural readings of the body. As explained by Lewis Bayly, author of the widely used and reprinted spiritual manual *The Practice of Pietie*, “[A]ll the Faithful, though they be many yet are they but one mystical Body, under one Head, which is Christ.” One of the wondrous qualities of that body was that it could stretch across time and space and alter believers’ perceptions of both. Bayly wrote, “This *Union* betwixt the Faithful is so ample, that no Distance of Place can part; so strong, that Death cannot dissolve it; so durable, that time cannot wear it out; so effectual, that it breeds a fervent Love betwixt those who never saw one another’s Face.” It was a conceptual space that could be infinitely expansive or intimately focused on the inner workings of an individual soul. And yet, the idea was not malleable ad infinitum, because individuals’ physical and bodily understanding constrained their comprehension of how the body of Christ organized itself.

Sectarian allegiances shared a common trait with developing ideas about racial or ethnic difference in that both provided ways for people to define who belonged in their community and who had to be kept outside it. Separate strains of Christianity held differing ideals about what the ideal community should look like, how it should work, and who should be in it. The notion that it was possible to separate groups of people based on particular external dissimilarities that signaled intrinsic incompatibility led to the idea that only people in the same group could form a strong community. These two methods for dividing the world into those like and those unlike oneself did not exist independently. Understanding how the body of Christ structured English communities highlights the points at which sectarian and racial differences categorized people similarly, and the points at which those definitions diverged and ceased to overlap. Contestations over faithful bodies were central to the early modern Atlantic world, which was made through the growth of the transatlantic slave trade and chattel race slavery; the increased contact between indigenous peoples of the Americas, Europeans, and Africans
and their dissimilar gender systems; changing conceptions of authority
and dependence; and conflict over religious differences.

The body of Christ metaphor demonstrates the centrality of religion
in how seventeenth-century Christians saw and experienced their world
and communities. This specific bodily metaphor affected the social or-
ganization of religious life for the people (mostly Europeans) who brought
the idea into the complex new Atlantic communities of the English
colonies. Ideas around the body of Christ existed in a world in which
many kinds of bodies held power and the control of bodily intimacy was
an essential part of social and familial hierarchies. Different concepts
of the body influenced and reflected other understandings of religion.
In southern New England tribes that were part of the Algonquian cul-
tural group, religious specialists called powwows and war leaders called
pniessok both garnered their mandate to lead from demonstrations of
the ritual expertise needed to navigate a world populated by numer-
ous other-than-human persons. Communication with those powerful
beings who shaped life in many ways, an action required for the health
of the community body, often required leaving the bounds of the physi-
cal body. West Central and West African peoples maintained networks
between the dead and the living through power objects that allowed
spiritual forces to take up temporary habitation in chosen individuals.
Access to power structures depended on showing one’s connection to
other-than-human persons, the numinous entities whom older scholar-
ship has often termed “supernatural” beings.

Studying religion in this fashion emphasizes relationships between
and among individuals, communities, and the divine, and thus supports
a parallel comparison between religions with and without extensive writ-
ten theologies. The English were not the only ones in the colonies who
had a sense of order inspired by belief in divine power. Africans who had
been enslaved and forcibly transported across the Atlantic and by way of
the Caribbean came from societies with beliefs about how humans ought
to interact with one another and with the divine. Indigenous peoples had
different religiously shaped visions of how social relationships should
be organized, which affected how they responded to invasions of their
homelands. Asking similar questions about Europeans, Africans, and
indigenous peoples of the Americas makes it easier to catch the swirling
currents of belief and practice among groups of people, and to see how
their respective maps overlay each other.
Confessional Spatiality

The puritan Atlantic helps push our understandings of the interplay between the physical and mental worlds of Atlantic actors, between intense local knowledge and a strongly crafted perception of confessional spatiality. Seventeenth-century English Protestants understood their religious communities through the metaphor of the body of Christ, so that both visible congregations of the faithful and the invisible community of the saved throughout the world were part of a body of which Christ was the head. They described churches and groups of individuals as specific members of that body: limbs, sinew, or blood. Communities in far-flung locales considered each other to be members of the same body. This body of Christ was linked to, but not the same as, the body politic. The points of overlap and disjuncture between these two bodies reveal the contours of how people determined the boundary between themselves and others, between insider and outsider. Although generally perceived to be rigid and restrictive, the puritan body of Christ proved more permeable to racial differences than the body politic because of the emphasis on voluntary membership. Relative distances did not always match the geography of the physical world in the cognitive space of the puritan Atlantic. The conceptual space of the body of Christ changed the mental maps of those who inhabited it, even as the inhabitants’ actions created that space and changed the relationships between themselves and others. It was a way of organizing society on the local level and simultaneously a means of understanding the vast physical space of the Atlantic.

In addition to Rhode Island and Bermuda, several colonies and locales outside the New England colonies of Massachusetts, Plymouth, New Haven, and Connecticut were part of the puritan Atlantic, an idea that does not depend as heavily on self-identification as does the “Protestant International,” a confessional network that understood itself to be fighting against a worldwide Catholic threat. The distinctive culture influenced by “hot” Protestants existed to at least some degree in Providence Island, the Bahamas, Antigua, Barbados, and parts of the Chesapeake, Long Island, and New Jersey. That shared culture changed dissenting Protestants’ perception of space by creating intimate links between physically far-flung places, and by making geographical neighbors into strangers. These locations have separately received scholarly attention, but considering them together as part of a shared confessional spatiality allows for more attention to the fluctuations of dissenting English culture in the Atlantic world more broadly. Although this book is not
a survey of all possible locations in the puritan Atlantic, it takes the first steps to consider how spatial connection linked a few key places.

As the puritan English in southern New England and Bermuda tried to create new societies, they brought a particular kind of order to their communities—godly order was meant to be paramount. While Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Bermuda differed from each other in significant ways, they more closely resembled each other in key aspects than they did other English colonies. As a group of dissenting colonies colonized by the “hotter” sorts of Protestants seeking reform beyond that instituted by the Church of England, they were definably separate from the British plantation colonies, whether southern mainland or Caribbean, as well as the mid-Atlantic colonies. These (loosely defined) puritans influenced social structures and cultural order in all three colonies, but did not control social institutions in all three places in equal measure. While these separate colonies shared a dissenting ethos, each location had a particular trajectory. For instance, puritans and Baptists visited and even preached to each other’s congregations in London during the seventeenth century, including John Bunyan, author of the allegory for Christian conversion *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. At the same time in Massachusetts Bay, ruling puritans persecuted Baptists as religious outlaws for their insistence on adult baptism. Without an established church in Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Baptists there did not face the same persecution and exclusion from town government. But they did have to contend with internal schisms. Conflicts over the appropriate life stage for baptism do not appear in Bermuda’s records. The public conversion narrative required in most of New England’s puritan churches relating an individual’s spiritual and physical struggles to discern the working of God’s grace upon and in them was not a common practice in English congregations, although those who had stayed in England considered themselves to be every bit as committed to purifying the Church of England, if not more so. A capacious definition of puritan religiosity that includes a wide spectrum of behavior encompasses such regional variations.

The puritan Atlantic becomes a less useful organizing concept after England tightened its control of its American colonies and brought them into closer order. By 1723, the law and social practice were increasingly codifying hierarchies of race and servitude, and New England merchants had sharply increased their participation in carrying the human cargo of the slave trade. New England was economically dependent on the slave trade long before New England ship captains carried enslaved Africans in
large numbers. After the English Civil War cut off the flood of migrants to New England in the 1640s—and with them their money and support of the local staples market—a large portion of New England’s economy rested on the demand of British slave colonies in the Caribbean for those staples.\textsuperscript{18} Bermuda’s turn to maritime activity and shipbuilding, which began after the dissolution of the governing Somers Islands Company in 1684, was fully established by 1720, a shift whose success depended on the labor of enslaved Bermudians at sea and on shore.\textsuperscript{19} In Rhode Island, planters in the Narragansett region turned to enslaved African labor even as they institutionalized their exploitation of Narragansetts’ labor through hereditary pauperdom, in which children inherited the debt obligations and indentured servitude of their parents.\textsuperscript{20} However, economic considerations were not the only cause of change. Relations among the colonies shifted as England tried to strengthen each colony’s connection to the metropole, while changes within puritanism meant that ministers no longer dictated specific behaviors to be enforced or punished by magistrates.

England’s closer attention to its empire also meant that legal structures in the colonies moved closer to common law practices, a shift that marked more uneven power relations between men and women. While the puritan vision of godly rules meted out harsh punishments to women who stepped outside the bounds of proper behavior, it also punished men for sexual and moral lapses and reduced their power over their wives, thus coming close to a single standard for sexual and moral conduct. Between 1690 and 1723, however, most puritan ministers’ view of the proper relationship between godly order and civil authority shifted so that ministers were no longer directing the civil authorities about which behaviors to punish. Legal reforms of the 1690s, which brought common law and specifically trained lawyers more forcefully into colonial courts, also weakened the influence of a distinct ethos on governmental and legal structures.\textsuperscript{21} These reforms were an outgrowth of Charles II’s earlier push toward greater centralization, which, although it succeeded to varying extents from place to place, had been aimed at all the English colonies.\textsuperscript{22}

Geographic Boundedness

The colonies included in this study shared a key spatial characteristic: all faced early and intense difficulties with their topographical and geographical boundedness. The ocean constrained the physical expansion of the mainland colonies along one border (east for Massachusetts, south
for Rhode Island), while other polities, Native and European, impeded them on the others. Massachusetts had to contend with Nipmucs, the Pocumtucks and other tribes in the Connecticut River Valley area, Massachusetts and Wampanoags along the coast, as well as Penacooks, Pequots, and Mahicans. To the north and east, Abenakis and Haudenosauneees (Iroquois), as well as the French, undercut the Bay colony’s ambitions of geographical growth in what is now Maine and at times seemed to threaten its survival. Rhode Island faced Wampanoags in the northeastern part of the colony, Narragansetts and Niantics farther south, and the Pequot survivors of the 1637 Pequot War with the English, who joined Mohegan communities based primarily in Connecticut but whose territory also comprised the southwest corner of Rhode Island. Rhode Island and Massachusetts could only encompass more territory in direct conflict with the charter claims of Connecticut, New York, and Plymouth. The charter granted to Rhode Island and Providence Plantations by Charles II in 1663 overlapped with Connecticut’s 1662 charter to the west and Plymouth’s and Massachusetts’s borders to the east. The lands granted in these charters were often more imaginative exercises than an indication of what the English could actually control of Algonquian homelands, but they still gesture toward the multiple levels of contestation over place even within the English space of New England.

As an uninhabited archipelago, a mere twenty-one square miles of land that lies in the Atlantic 648 miles (563 nautical miles) from the nearest land (what is now Cape Hatteras on the coast of North Carolina), Bermuda differed from the mainland colonies. A preexisting topography separated New England from Bermuda, which had no established human sense of place. All inhabitants of the island colony were newcomers who simultaneously established its conceptual and physical landscapes. The island-born constituted a majority of the inhabitants by the mid-seventeenth century, an unusual demographic situation that offered an earlier hospitable environment for combinations of indigenous, English, and African beliefs and practices than in other colonies where the constant influx of African-born people and established indigenous communities renewed knowledge about cultural and religious practices. Bermudians of color were mostly insiders rather than outsiders to Christianity, a familiarity that white Bermudians largely recognized because they had grown up alongside one another and lived together in the same households. A similar shift away from African-born individuals did not happen in British mainland North American colonies until the beginning of the nineteenth century.
In New England, even when the puritan Atlantic was at its strongest, it was a thin overlay on top of what for time out of mind had been, and remained, fundamentally Native space. The English colonized and laid claim to land that its original inhabitants had already adapted for human habitation and shaped through ritual practice. Archaeological research has uncovered human-made stone mounds and caverns devoid of the detritus that accumulates from habitation but that were built over a long period of time, indicating repeated and extended human engagement with the sites for purposes besides daily living. These mounds and caverns were organized around landscape features marking astronomically significant events such as the winter and summer solstices and the rising and setting of the Pleiades, a cluster of stars. One such stone feature complex is near what later became the “praying Indian” town of Hassanamisco and appears to have been constructed around 1,300 years ago. It lies near the source of almost all the major rivers that flow into what is now Rhode Island and the eastern half of Massachusetts and remained under direct Native control until 1715.28

The northeastern coast was contested space, not only in terms of competition over land and other resources, but also in how Europeans and Natives thought of resources and how they defined what it meant to share space. Although southern Algonquians varied in particular burial rituals, preferred family forms, governmental structures, and dialects and languages, they shared an idea of the space of the Northeast as a “common pot” on which all depended for sustenance, and in which those who could take control of more owed assistance to those who were weaker and so had less. The common pot was not a conflict-free paradise: those who had less owed allegiance and acquiescence to a lower place in the social hierarchy to those who had more. The English had a more exclusionary view in which the privilege of the powerful was to cordon off space and to exclude others from it and its resources. Puritans attempted to mold the northeastern coastal region to their experiences and expectations in order to make their own place. But Natives often turned colonial institutions to their own use to subvert attempted European control and reshaping of space, for instance by using writing to assert their own understanding of proper land use. Southern Algonquians perceived their multiple communities as strongly linked to homelands, to connections along waterways and through kin relationships.29

Natives in Northeast America cultivated relationships with kin and allied tribes, as well as made their own appeals to European monarchs, based on their understandings of connection between peoples and places.
Native political topographies functioned quite differently and took little notice of differences among the English like those between Baptist and puritan. While their homelands did not match up with English-drawn colonial boundaries, Algonquians contending with southern New England demonstrated an astute understanding of the rivalries between English colonies as well as those between European empires. Although outside the bounds of this book, it is important to note that "Dawnland" or eastern Algonquian peoples such as the Wabanakis continued to exert powerful influence over English and French efforts farther north and east long after King Philip's War had weakened most southern Algonquian groups. Natives were much more than pawns on a European chessboard; the English and other Europeans often only dimly perceived the complex political calculations of which they were only one part.

The late seventeenth century was a pivotal period for Native peoples in southern New England, with King Philip's War, shifting intertribal alliances, and ever-expanding land encroachment by the English. Economic relationships also shifted after New England colonial governments disestablished wampum as a legal currency. While King Philip's War and later conflicts were devastating to many southeastern Native tribes, Algonquians did not disappear from southern New England after 1676. However, after that point they could not marshal direct military opposition to the English, and it became increasingly difficult for individual Natives and Africans to win recognition or space from the English for their competing worldviews.

The late seventeenth century was also a difficult time in the puritan Atlantic. In the years after the failure of the Protectorate and through the reign of George I, the aim of a pure Protestant community seemed under attack from every direction. The period after 1660 saw the increasingly strict enforcement of the decrees and practices of the Church of England on the eastern side of the Atlantic, and on the western side, the revocation of the Massachusetts Bay charter, the institution and downfall of the Dominion of New England, and heightened warfare with Algonquian peoples, including the extremely bloody King Philip's War. With the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 ending the toleration of Protestants in France, it seemed as if Protestantism was in danger of being wiped from the face of the earth. In 1688 and 1689, royal officials' attempts to hide the news that the Protestant William of Orange had taken over the English throne from the Catholic James II seemed to point to a Catholic conspiracy to put the colonies under the
control of France and—by extension—the pope. For those who were convinced or hopeful that Protestant countries, especially England, were to take part in bringing about the new Jerusalem, the prospect of their apostasizing to Catholicism was seen as a portent of Satan’s imminent triumph.

Disconnect between religious affiliation and political boundaries intensified anxiety about the fate of countries and empires. Once England became Protestant, high-level and popular rhetoric about the imperial powers of Portugal, Spain, and France often couched rationale for fears of, and wars with, these polities as a religious battle between Protestant and Catholic. But English Catholics and French Huguenots complicated any simple correspondence between English and Protestant, or French and Catholic. The commercial rivalry between the two Protestant powers of England and the Netherlands resulted in three wars during the seventeenth century, testimony that religious affiliation was not the only concern driving foreign policy. Ireland remained a potent Catholic force at the geographic core of an English empire. Many English Protestants asked themselves what it meant to be a professor of the faith and a member of a community, commonwealth, nation, and empire, uncertainty only intensified by their interactions with each other and with Natives and Africans.

Race, Religion, and Identity

Techniques of differentiation based on skin color, religion, and gender were not new to the seventeenth century, nor did Europeans have a monopoly on them. Neither the seventeenth century, nor the eighteenth century, nor the sixteenth century is the origin point for a calcified notion of biological race. Indeed, the search for that origin point distracts our attention from the ways in which categories of difference have functioned at specific times and places. European intellectuals did spend many pages trying to figure out the cause and meaning of human difference during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as their societies came into contact with peoples in Africa and the Americas, but their answers drew upon religion as well as upon skin color and freedom status. The latter markers of categorization were not the only or most important ones to which English colonists turned in the middle of the seventeenth century. Religious affinity was often a more significant component of identity in the period.

From the mid-seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries, Europeans increasingly defined difference racially rather than religiously, but
their concept of race remained inflected by religious ways of marking difference. English and other European descriptions of Jews used rhetoric about their existence as a visually different race and linked supposed character traits to physiognomy. The English likened Spanish and French Catholics to the indigenous people with whom they interacted. Thus framed, the separation between Protestants and Catholics frequently overshadowed variations among particular strains of English dissenters. That evolution of difference drew on elements of a transatlantic intellectual culture but was also rooted in local circumstances. Differences in religion often provided a language for Europeans to express their perceived superiority over Africans and indigenous people of the Americas, superiority that could have bodily characteristics. Upon encountering southern Algonquian settlements inhabited only by the dead or dying, some puritans in the 1620s and 1630s interpreted Natives’ susceptibility to European disease as a sign that the English were meant to rule over the land.39

The religious and racial currents of categorization ebbed and flowed across each other in more than one place. European theologians wrote treatises on the origins of Africans and Indians according to biblical accounts.40 Puritan divines and enthusiasts in Old and New England picked up on some of those themes of the origins of all people. Some put forth the idea that Natives were one of the Lost Tribes and the eastern coast of North America the new Israel, as support for their decision to leave England. This theory of Indians’ Israelite origins also encouraged metropolitan support for the colonies. By supporting the colonies, the English in Old England would be supporting Indian conversion, which would help bring about the second coming of Christ and the millennium. For others, Indians were Gentiles and could only experience mass conversion after the conversion of the Jews. A few might be eligible for conversion before the millennium, but their origins precluded their attainment of Christianity before that series of events.41 The discussion hinged on the issue of America’s relative place in Europe’s sense of space, and whether America was a long-separated part of the same whole, or an entirely different entity whose full incorporation into the European Christian world required the end of this world.

The indeterminacy and tension between different categories of belonging and affinity (race, region, gender, and religion) is what makes attention to identity a useful means for unraveling the complexities of seventeenth-century social structures. Identity emphasizes the significance of religious affiliation as a means to determine insider/outsider status, as
determined primarily through practice in addition to any explicit, articulated theological stance. In this context, the term points to the ways in which people related to each other and created categories of difference. Individuals and groups took what was soft, malleable, and contested, and described it as if it were hard, intrinsic, and non-negotiable, even as they maintained multiple allegiances.\textsuperscript{42}

Puritan spiritual concerns reorganized the priorities of state, class, race, and gender as grounds for drawing boundary lines between insider and outsider. Religious concepts shaped ideologies of race and gender in case law regulating unlawful sex. The moments of contention caught in the court records record the struggle over believing bodies and their proper regulation—how people ought to behave. These moments permit the reconstruction of localized communities and small-scale relationships, the particularities of small groups of people. But this microlevel of reconstruction has greater implications. English colonial courts’ struggle to discipline individual bodies of fornicators was part of a larger process of creating and using categories of subjection, domination, and privilege. Individuals disagreed over the boundaries of the community and how to determine who might belong to it. They turned to the critical factors of race and religion to define those boundaries and to make them appear inevitable and unchangeable, rather than contingent on context. Many English Protestants who dissented from the established Church of England came to accept race as a dividing line in the religious cosmos despite their commitment to the idea that the only religious separations should have to do with the soul and spirit.

The book is divided into three parts. In “Defining,” the chapters explore the overlapping spaces in the puritan Atlantic. The first chapter follows Bermuda’s Atlantic connections to the Caribbean and to Africa in order to begin telling the full story of the definition of bodies on the island. The first African and indigenous Caribbean inhabitants of Bermuda shaped the land and coast, entreated other-than-human persons, and began to make place out of uninhabited space. The next two chapters map the contours and characteristics of Algonquian communities in southern New England and of the puritan body of Christ in Bermuda and New England. Part 2, “Performing,” considers an array of religious practices that in some way challenged English puritan conceptions of the body of Christ. It begins with the uncertain welcome the English gave Natives and Africans into the body of Christ as they debated the parameters of that body. Chapters 5 and 6 examine two groups, English Quakers and Irish
Catholics, whose ritual performances and embodied existence interrupted any sharp and easy one-to-one mapping of racial and religious boundaries. Christian communities formed by people of color are the focus of the next two chapters. “Praying Indians” in New England reminded the English that “Christian” was not limited to “English” or even “European.” References to religious instruction in indenture contracts for African and Native children offer a window onto their efforts to gain entry to the body of Christ, a membership that, in English eyes, grew more conditional as the association between darker skin color and servitude strengthened. The third section, “Disciplining,” focuses on three aspects of legal performance that regulated sex in the body of Christ. Unlawful sex was a key vector of ideas about race, religion, and the boundary between insider and outsider. Chapter 9 surveys concepts of, and language about, sinfulness and uncleanness in English and European references to interracial sex. This language was based in religious attitudes about all sex outside marriage, not interracial sex in particular. Substantial Bermudian case law, the focus of chapter 10, revealed a shift in the status of women of color. Through the seventeenth century, women of color were sinners whose sexual activity fell under the purview of community regulation, but by the beginning of the eighteenth century their disappearance from unlawful sex cases signaled their primary definition as property. The appearance of race and specific religious affiliation in English colonial laws regulating sex was irregular. The last chapter focuses on the lesser-known and later appearance of racial language in sex law in Massachusetts and Bermuda, moving beyond Virginia’s more frequently discussed 1662 and 1691 statutes. The 1662 Virginia statute doubled the fine for fornication between “any Christian” and “a negro man or woman,” while the 1691 statute outlawed interracial marriage. Massachusetts divided potential offenders into “Christian” and “Negro or other slaves” in a 1705 law but had less focus on an inherited Christianity than Virginia. Bermuda’s 1723 law did not use religious categories and confined its differentiation to racial labels. The redirected efforts to discipline the body of Christ altered its lineaments to exclude people of color, configuring space so as to give them little place in the community of sinners.

A Note on Terminology and Editorial Process

Choosing racial labels and terminology is a fraught process that has no perfect solution. When referring to Native peoples of southern New England, I use specific tribal/sachemship affiliations when possible, and
Native and Indian interchangeably when discussing Native peoples as a group or English ideas about Native peoples. Tribe can be problematic because of its association with consigning Natives to a distant past, but it is also important for many Natives today in their ongoing efforts for governmental and public recognition as distinct political entities and so I use it advisedly. I use English for both colonists in New England and in England as many colonists maintained strong ties and traveled across the Atlantic with relative frequency.

Michael Jarvis argues that the English colonists in Bermuda, linked by dense patterns of trade, family, and settlement and largely free of interference from the proprietary Somers Islands Company, came to depend on each other and by the 1630s experienced an “ethnogenesis of sorts” in which they thought of themselves as “wee Bermoodians” first and foremost. He suggests that the same may have been true even for the earliest African and Indian slaves imported in the 1610s, who gave their island-born children English names. White Bermudian seems appropriate to describe English-descended Bermudians, given that most often that group was marked by its lack of a racial identifier and the word white appeared at least occasionally in records by 1679. Using black Bermudian in reference to African- and Indian-descended Bermudians is more problematic. The term contains within itself what James Sweet termed “the quiet violence of ethnogenesis,” the implicit fact that the creative forces marshalled by Africans in the Atlantic world were necessary in the first place because of the destructiveness of the transatlantic slave trade. Subsuming Indians—most of whom were of indigenous Caribbean origin for much of the seventeenth century although Natives from the North American mainland were also present—into the category of black Bermudian elides the direct and indirect ways that European diseases and invasions decimated many Indian peoples of the Americas. Indians reached their largest percentage of the enslaved population listed in probate inventories in the first decade of the eighteenth century, when they made up a fifth of all slaves listed.

It is true that people identified as Indian and African in Bermuda were in broadly similar situations: the island had never had an indigenous population, so neither Indians nor Africans were in territory to which they had more than a few generations of connection. There was no sustained indication, beyond concerns over one particular shipment in the mid-1640s, that white Bermudians were unsure about enslaving Indians. But Bermuda was not completely isolated. The difference between Indian and African mattered as part of ongoing debates over the meaning of race
as a way to classify humanity into hierarchical categories based on sets of characteristics marked by skin color. I have chosen to use black and Indian when the Bermudian records use specific identifiers of “Negro” and “Indian,” but the somewhat ahistorical Bermudians of color when referring to Africans and Indians as a group in Bermuda specifically.

For ease of reading quotations of primary sources, I have silently substituted th for the thorn (y), expanded abbreviations, and switched u and ν, i and j to conform with modern usage. As a reminder that the words were recorded in a very different time, however, I have reproduced irregularities in spelling and syntax.