



# Flaws in the Protestant Code

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## Abstract

I want to argue that in the modern world national cultures are distinctly different from one another, and although not homogeneous, are homogenizing: that is, each national society has a culture that, while allowing for difference, nonetheless presses in the direction of a single dominant profile. This is to put in more abstract terms the argument of *Habits of the Heart* that America has a first language, composed of two complementary aspects, utilitarian and expressive individualism, and also second languages, namely biblical and civic Republican languages that have tended to get pushed to the margins. Already in the Introduction to the new paperback edition of *Habits*, my coauthors and I suggested that the individualism which is America's dominant cultural orientation was not solely derived from 18th century Utilitarianism and 19th century Romanticism, but had roots in both of our second languages as well. In my November, 1997, address to the American Academy of Religion, "Is There a Common American Culture?" I took the argument a step further, reaching almost to the point from which I want to start this paper. There I argued that beyond the homogenizing effect of television, education, and consumerism, and deeper even than utilitarian and expressive individualism, there was a still, small voice, a tiny seed, from which our current cultural orientation derives. Nestled in the very core of utilitarian and expressive individualism is something very deep, very genuine, very old, very American, something we did not quite see or say in *Habits*, and its core is religious. In *Habits* we quoted a famous passage in Toqueville's *Democracy in America*: "I think I can see the whole destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who landed on those shores." Then we went on to name John Winthrop, following Tocqueville's own predilection, as the likeliest candidate for being that first Puritan. Now I am ready to admit, although regretfully, that we, and Tocqueville, were probably wrong. That first Puritan who contained our whole destiny might have been, as we also half intimated in *Habits*, Anne Hutchinson, but the stronger candidate, because we know so much more about him, is Roger Williams

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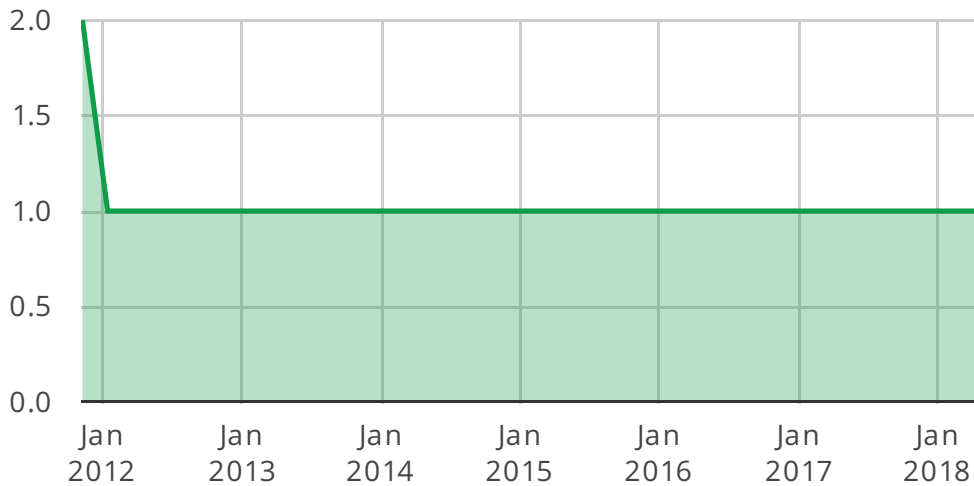
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Thomism in John Owen, / Or my drank cafe – tfoyl in schasheshka sit".

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