

**Bangor University**

## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**A comparative study of the doctrines of atonement and justification in the writings of John Owen (1616-1683) and John Wesley (1703-1791) : With considerations of the middle-way contributions of Richard Baxter (1615-1691) and John Tillotson (1630-1694) and the theology of the Protestant Reformers.**

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
THE DOCTRINES OF ATONEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION  
IN THE WRITINGS OF  
JOHN OWEN (1616-1683) AND JOHN WESLEY (1703-1791)

With consideration of the middle-way contributions of  
Richard Baxter (1615-1691) and John Tillotson (1630-1694)

and

The theology of the Protestant Reformers

by

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Summary

This thesis examines and compares the theological views of Dr. John Owen (1616-1683), the Puritan pastor and theologian, and John Wesley (1703-1791), the evangelist and founder of Methodism. The area of enquiry is confined to the subjects of Atonement and Justification, matters which occasioned protracted doctrinal debate during the period under review. Since Owen and Wesley represent the Calvinist and Arminian interpretations of the controversy, their viewpoints express what became a permanent religious rift within British evangelical Protestantism. The analysis will also consider the viability of the theological via media represented by Richard Baxter (1615-1691) and Archbishop Tillotson (1630-1694). The discussion also takes account of the theology of the Protestant Reformers, in an attempt to assess the doctrinal modifications which took place during the 17th and 18th centuries, and the factors, both theological and philosophical, which brought them about. The analysis seeks both to assess the various aspects of the debate within the context of historical theology, and to evaluate them according to the criteria of Biblical exegesis. By adopting such a method, an attempt is made to present a coherent alternative to the conflicting judgements of John Owen and John Wesley.

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Abbreviations

Appeal I/II	(Wesley)	<u>An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion / A Farther Appeal....</u> in <u>Works</u> , (ed. Jackson), Vol. 8, (4th ed., 1841), pp.1-239.
ATR		<u>Anglican Theological Review</u>
BOT		<u>Banner of Truth</u>
BQ		<u>Baptist Quarterly</u>
Bulletin		<u>Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin</u>
Comm.	(Calvin)	<u>Calvin's Commentaries</u> (Torrance ed.) (1959-1972)
CT	(Baxter)	<u>Richard Baxter's Catholick Theologie</u> (1675)
DA I/II	(Wesley)	<u>Dialogues (I, II) Between an Antinomian and His Friend</u> , in <u>Works</u> , Vol. 10, pp.257-274.
DAB		<u>Dictionary of American Biography</u>
Dis. A.	(Owen)	<u>Display of Arminianism</u> in <u>Works</u> , Vol. 10.
DD	(Owen)	<u>Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu; or The Death of Death in the Death of Christ</u> , in <u>Works</u> , (ed. W. H. Goold, 1852), Vol. 10, pp.139-428.
DNB		<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
DP	(Wesley)	<u>A Dialogue Between a Predestinarian and His Friend</u> , in <u>Works</u> , Vol. 10, pp.250-257.
EC	(Baxter)	<u>An End of Doctrinal Controversies</u> (1691)
EQ		<u>Evangelical Quarterly</u>
HS	(Owen)	<u>A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit</u> , in <u>Works</u> , Vol. 3, pp.1f.
Institutes	(Calvin)	<u>Institutes of the Christian Religion</u> , tr. Henry Beveridge, (1962 rep.).
JEH		<u>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</u>

JF	(Owen)	<u>The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, in Works, Vol. 5, pp.1-400.</u>
JTS		<u>Journal of Theological Studies (new series)</u>
MHB		<u>Methodist Hymn Book</u>
Notes	(Wesley)	<u>Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, (1754), (many editions).</u>
Paraphrase	(Baxter)	<u>Paraphrase on the New Testament.... (1685)</u>
PCC	(Wesley)	<u>Predestination Calmly Considered, in Works, Vol. 10, pp.197-249.</u>
PHSE		<u>Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society of England</u>
PJ	(Wesley)	<u>Preface to a Treatise on Justification, in Works, Vol. 10, pp.304-333.</u>
RB	(Baxter)	<u>Reliquiae Baxterianae, or Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative....of His Life and Times, (ed. Matthew Sylvester) (1696).</u>
SJT		<u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>
TCHS		<u>Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society</u>
Till.I/II	(Tillotson)	<u>The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, late Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (posthumous), (ed. Ralph Barker, 1712), Vols. I/II.</u>
Till. III	(Tillotson)	<u>The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson.... (6th ed.), (1710).</u>
UR	(Baxter)	<u>Universal Redemption of Mankind (1694)</u>
URC		<u>Journal of the United Reformed Church Historical Society</u>
WHS		<u>Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society</u>

Since the Authorised Version of the Bible (1611) was the English version generally quoted by the main theologians in this study, all quotations will accordingly be from the A.V. When references to other versions are made, these will be indicated, e.g. Revised Version (R.V.), (1881-4), Revised Standard Version (R.S.V.), (1946-52), New International Version (N.I.V.), (1970-78).

PART ONE: THE THEOLOGIANS

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Introduction

This study is concerned to investigate one of the most problematic and sensitive areas of Christian theology. The doctrines of the atoning death of Christ and of Justification have a perennial interest for theologians and church historians, if only because of the numerous controversies they have occasioned. The interest aroused by them must obviously be explained in terms of their central and fundamental character. No serious study of the New Testament can ignore subjects which bear so directly on those two questions 'What is Christianity?' and 'What is a Christian?' As such, it is unlikely that interest in the underlying theological issues will subside, as long as serious answers to these questions are sought. This study is intended to be a contribution to a debate of more than passing historical significance, although its matter is confined to a particular period of church history.

With regard to matter, attention will be focused on two theologians whose influence and importance are unquestioned, and who may be regarded as leading representatives of distinct theological traditions within British Protestantism. The period in question covers the one hundred and fifty years between 1640 and 1790, encompassing the careers of Dr. John Owen (1616-1683), the Puritan pastor and theologian, and John Wesley (1703-1791), the evangelist and founder of Methodism. To provide a 'middle ground' in the debate, the contributions of Richard Baxter

(1615-1691), Owen's erstwhile Nonconformist colleague and occasional opponent, and John Tillotson (1630-1694) who became Archbishop of Canterbury, will figure prominently in the discussion.

With regard to method, this study will be both comparative and evaluative. It is not merely an excursion into the field of historical theology. As well as surveying the contrasting ideas of the four theologians within their historical context, an attempt will be made to reach a verdict. Biblical criteria and exegesis will be employed to compare convictions and test their validity. Such a study as this is possible because the four theologians shared a common commitment to the Protestant rule of faith. They all regarded Holy Scripture as normative and authoritative, i.e. the fundamental axiom of Reformation theology, sola Scriptura, allowed of no discussion. The particular fascination of this study arises from the fact that four biblical theologians reached very different and far reaching conclusions in the course of expounding not the obscure, but the perspicuous, areas of New Testament teaching. The analysis will be concerned to explain differences where they occur, and the evaluation will suggest an alternative solution where possible.

That Owen, Baxter, Tillotson and Wesley represent four major ecclesiastical traditions within British Protestantism is largely incidental to this study. Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, Anglicanism and Methodism are not, as such, under review, although each leader played a significant role in the shaping of a denominational ethos.

It is a fact that they had common religious roots, and that they were all ordained in the Church of England. It is also true that their particular doctrinal emphases explain in great measure how their ecclesiastical differences emerged. However, the main preoccupation of the analysis will be with their personal doctrinal opinions. These will be assessed employing criteria they themselves officially endorsed. The fact that Wesley was not a contemporary of the other three divines will in no way affect the investigation, which is concerned primarily with their convictions rather than their careers.

In the course of this study, attention will be focused on those publications which relate specifically to the questions of the Atonement and Justification. The primary comparison will be made between Owen and Wesley, since their views represent the extremities of the Calvinist-Arminian divide within British Evangelical Protestantism. The secondary comparison will consider the mediating positions of Baxter and Tillotson, in order to test their claims to provide a tenable alternative to the views of the main disputants. The entire discussion will take place against the background of Reformation theology, where a comparison with the teaching of John Calvin in particular will, in certain instances, facilitate some illuminating insights in the course of the debate. Before the main analysis is undertaken, brief biographical sketches will introduce the quartet of divines, in chronological order. In addition, special attention will be paid to the character and circumstances of those writings which are relevant to this study.

I: Dr. John Owen (1616-1683)

1. His significance

Dr. John Owen is assured of an honoured place in the annals of the Christian Church. His eminence is soon observed by students of the religious and political tumults of seventeenth century England. His accomplishments were not merely confined to religious affairs either. The interaction between religion and politics during the Puritan Revolution involved him in both arenas, where his activities have earned him just renown. Yet three centuries were to pass before an adequately researched biography was to appear. Memoirs by Asty (1), Williams (2), Orme (3), Thompson(4) and Moffatt (5), although very valuable in many respects, cannot justly claim to satisfy this requirement. Even then, material is wanting to adequately portray Owen the man, compared with the personal information available about his contemporary Richard Baxter. However, Peter Toon concludes his fine study by saying that 'Owen shines through the available material as a truly great man, whose one basic concern in word and deed, book and action, was the proclamation of Jesus Christ and His gospel.'(6)

- (1) John Asty, Memoirs of the Life of John Owen in A Complete Collection of the Sermons of John Owen (1721).
- (2) Edward Williams, Life of Owen in The Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews (abr.), (1790).
- (3) William Orme, Memoirs of Owen in Works, ed. Thomas Russell (1826), Vol. 1.
- (4) Andrew Thompson, Life of Dr. Owen in Works, ed. W. H. Goold (1850), Vol. 1.
- (5) James Moffatt, Introductory Sketch: The Life of Owen in The Golden Book of John Owen (1904).
- (6) God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen (1971), p.178. The Biographia Britannica (1760) and the D.N.B. provide useful surveys. See also G. F. Nuttall, MS Sermons and Letters by John Owen and others in the Library of New College, London, TCHS, Vol. XX, No. 1, May, 1965, pp. 43f.

Friends and foes alike have been generous in their praise of Owen. He was 'the Calvin of England' to a fellow Congregationalist from Newcastle (7), whereas Anthony Wood, the bitter Anglican critic conceded that Owen was an 'Atlas and Patriarch of Independency.'(8) Despite numerous instances of theological disagreement, Baxter was not slow to describe Owen as an 'excellent man' of 'rare parts and worth'.(9) In the next century, Philip Doddridge, whose views reflected Baxter's theology, could still warmly speak of 'the great and excellent Dr. Owen'.(10) Even John Wesley, whose antagonism towards Owen's theology will be very evident in this study, could applaud Owen as 'an unexceptionable judge of men and manners' (11). The nineteenth century saw no abatement of praise for Owen. In the 1850 edition of Owen's complete works, W. H. Goold wrote 'It would be presumption to enter upon any commendation of John Owen as an author and divine. His works will continue to gather around them the respect and admiration of the Church of Christ, so long as reverence is cherished for the Christian faith.'(12) When Goold's edition of Owen's works was republished by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1965 (Vols. I-XVI), the jacket of Volume I proclaimed the author as 'The greatest British theologian of all time.' Understandably,

(7) Memoirs of Ambrose Barnes, ed. W. H. D. Longstaffe (1867), p. 16.

(8) Wood, History of the University of Oxford, ed. Gutch, Vol. 2, (1791), p. 650. See (George Vernon), A Letter to a Friend (1670), p.36.

(9) Given in Orme, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 359.

(10) Works, ed. Williams and Parsons (1802-5), Vol. 2, p.223.

(11) Works, ed. Jackson (1841), Vol. 6, p. 311.

(12) Op. cit., Vol. 1, p. VII.



Congregational scholars honour Owen's name. Dr. Erik Routley said he was 'the greatest of the Puritan scholastics' (13), whilst Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall emphasises the 'centrality' of Owen in pre-Restoration Congregationalism, a position which became 'yet more striking' after 1660 (14). Dr. R. Tudur Jones writes that Owen possessed an 'uncanny ability to keep in touch with people of all kinds both within and without the circle of Congregational Churches and his quiet and dignified influence upon those in authority made him the nerve-centre of the Congregational resistance to the penal code.'(15)

## 2. His Life

John Owen was born at Stadham, Oxfordshire in 1616, the year of William Shakespeare's death. His father was a Puritan clergyman, so John, only four years old when the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for the New World, was nurtured in those principles which later were to direct his life. He entered Queens College, Oxford, in 1628, graduating B.A. in 1632 and M.A. in 1635. Soon after this, Owen was ordained deacon by John Bancroft, Bishop of Oxford and, in 1637, he became a private tutor in the family of Sir Robert Dormer at Great Milton, not far from Oxford. In 1642, the year the Civil War began, Owen moved to London. It was during a service at St. Mary's Church, Aldermanbury, that he experienced assurance of salvation. About this time, he was

(13) English Religious Dissent (1960), p. 10.

(14) Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640-1660 (1957), p.39-40.

(15) Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962 (1962), p. 71.

engaged on his first book, A Display of Arminianism (16), which was published in 1643. Owen's obvious sympathy with the Calvinism of the Synod of Dordrecht assured him of recognition by the authorities. He was thus presented to the living of Fordham in Essex.

In 1644, Owen married Miss Mary Rooke. Following the Battle of Naseby (1645), and the end of the first Civil War, Owen was invited to preach before Parliament. The sermon was published with the title A Vision of Unchangeable Mercy (17). By now, Owen was a minister at Coggeshall, also in Essex. During this time, he rejected presbyterianism in favour of a congregational view of church order, his convictions being published in Eshcol; or Rules of Direction for the Walking of the Saints (1647) (18). Soon after this, Owen published what was to become one of his most important controversial works, Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu; Or The Death of Death in the Death of Christ (1647) (19). This work expounds the doctrine that the atonement of Christ is limited to the elect alone, and remains the classical high Calvinist statement of this subject.

In 1648, Owen was chaplain to the Parliamentary forces under General Fairfax at the siege of Colchester. After preaching again before Parliament in 1649, he became acquainted with Oliver Cromwell, who invited Owen to accompany him to Ireland. In 1650, he was appointed preacher to the Council of State and again was Cromwell's chaplain

(16) Works, Vol. 10, p.1f.

(17) Works, Vol. 8, p.1f.

(18) Works, Vol. 13, p.51f.

(19) Works, Vol. 10, p.139f.

with the expedition to Scotland. This same year saw Owen's first controversy with Richard Baxter, who had criticised Owen's Death of Death in his Aphorismes of Justification (1649). Owen's rejoinder was entitled Of the Death of Christ, the Price He Paid (1650) (20). In 1651, Owen was appointed Dean of Christ Church, and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford in the following year. He was created D.D. in 1653. In 1654, Owen was chosen as a 'trier', or member of 'The Committee for the Approbation of Publique Preachers', set up to oversee Cromwell's new religious settlement. With the threatened uprising of 1655, Owen organised the defence of Oxford.

Owen's period as Vice-Chancellor saw several works published in relation to the controversies with Arminianism and Socinianism, particularly his Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance (1654) (21), and Vindiciae Evangelicae (1655) (22). In 1657, he published Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (23), a work which was to involve its author in considerable controversy.

Owen ceased to be Vice-Chancellor after the Protector's death in 1658. In the same year he took prominent part at the Savoy Assembly in the preparation of the Declaration of Faith and Order (24), the confession of the Independent or Congregational Churches. In 1659, Owen was accused of involvement in the plot to remove Richard Cromwell from power, although he denied the charge. During this time, he was in London attempting to

(20) Works, Vol. 10, p.429f.

(21) Works, Vol. 11, p.1f.

(22) Works, Vol. 12, p.1f.

(23) Works, Vol. 2, p.1f.

(24) The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, ed. A.G. Matthews (1959).

secure the support of General Monk and the army for the Independents. As sympathy for the Restoration increased, Owen was ejected from his Deanery at Christ Church, being replaced by the presbyterian Dr. Edward Reynolds, later Bishop of Norwich. From this time, Owen rapidly disappeared from public life, retiring to his estate at Stadhampton in 1660. Quietness did not mean idleness, for, in 1661, Owen published his monumental Latin treatise Theologoumena Pantodapa (25) on the history of religion and theology. The following year saw Animadversions on a Treatise entitled Fiat Lux (26), a work which pleased Lord Clarendon for its refutation of Roman Catholicism. This led to an offer of preferment in the restored Anglican Church, which Owen declined. With the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, he gave expression to his Nonconformist principles in A Discourse Concerning Liturgies and their Imposition (27). Owen championed the cause of religious liberty in a number of anonymous tracts. At this time, his family moved to Stoke Newington, the home of Sir John Hartopp, a prominent Nonconformist.

In 1667, Owen was active in seeking to persuade Parliament to pass a Toleration Act. He was also engaged in discussions with Richard Baxter about Nonconformist unity, but to no avail (28). An easing of restrictions on Nonconformists came in 1672 with the Declaration of Indulgence, for which Owen personally thanked the King.

(25) Works, Vol. 17, p.1 f.

(26) Works, Vol. 14, p.1 f.

(27) Works, Vol. 15, p.1 f.

(28) See The Correspondence of John Owen, ed. Toon, (1970), pp.136f.

In 1673, the year of the Test Act, Owen's church united with the congregation of the deceased Joseph Caryl at Leadenhall Street in London. In the following year, Owen published a reply (29) to criticisms of his earlier work on Communion (1657) made by William Sherlock. One of Sherlock's objections was levelled at Owen's theory of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. In 1674, the year of Milton's death, Owen published the first volumes of his Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit (30) and the masterly Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews (31). The preliminary Exercitations had appeared in 1668 (32). In the midst of this literary activity, Owen knew domestic sadness, when his first wife died in 1675. However, in 1676, he married Dorothy D'oyley.

In his remaining years, a number of works flowed from Owen's pen covering various doctrinal, controversial, practical and devotional subjects. Of special importance are The Doctrine of Justification by Faith (1677) (33), The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded (1681) (34) and An Inquiry into the Original, Nature...and Communion of Evangelical Churches (1681) (35). This latter work was occasioned by Dean Stillingfleet's attack on the Nonconformists, whom Owen had earlier answered in A Brief Vindication of the Nonconformists from the Charge of Schism (1680) (36). This proved to be Owen's final

- (29) Works, Vol. 2, p.275 f.
- (30) Works, Vol. 3, p.1 f.
- (31) Works, Vol. 20, p.1 f.
- (32) Works, Vol. 18, p.1 f.
- (33) Works, Vol. 5, p.1 f.
- (34) Works, Vol. 7, p.261 f.
- (35) Works, Vol. 15, p.187 f.
- (36) Works, Vol. 13, p.303 f.

controversy. After living for a while at Kensington, he finally died at Ealing in 1683 at the age of sixty seven. Five years later, the 'Glorious Revolution' brought to an end both the Stuart monarchy and the sufferings of the Nonconformists. The toleration for which Owen had laboured so long was finally granted in the Act of Toleration of 1689.

### 3. His Works

Owen's Display of Arminianism (1643) was an instance of the author's astuteness. With the Puritans in the ascendancy, the treatise met a public need. The subject was 'artfully chosen' (37) since Owen was anxious for recognition. A tangible consequence of the book's success was Owen's presentation to the living at Fordham. Toon admits the treatise 'was no masterpiece' (38) and Packer describes it as a 'competent piece of prentice-work, rather in the nature of a research thesis' (39). Nonetheless, Thompson was right to say that 'it is rich in matter which must have staggered the courtly theologians of the age ....it is hung all around with massive Calvinistic armour' (40). The Display defends 'the central core of orthodox Calvinism' (41), with Owen's Aristotelian methodology much in evidence. W. H. Goold rather regrets the acerbity of Owen's style, suggesting also that the author might not be sufficiently discriminating in his assessment of Arminianism. Arminius' views are not sufficiently distinguished from those

(37) Biographia Britannica (1760), Vol. 5, p.3291.

(38) Op. cit., p.15.

(39) Introductory Essay to The Death of Death (1959 rep.), p.23.

(40) Op. cit., p.XXXII.

(41) Toon, op. cit., p.15.

of his followers, and too often Arminianism is confounded with Pelagianism. These criticisms notwithstanding, the book continued to attract attention. Even John Wesley could not ignore it in his controversy with Rowland Hill in 1772.(42)

Of far greater importance was Owen's second major work, and his first masterpiece: Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu; or the Death of Death in the Death of Christ (1648). It was the result of 'more than seven years' serious enquiry'(43). Owen believed that the heart of the debate with Arminianism concerned the nature and extent of the Atonement, and this work fully reflects that belief. Packer appears to have no serious reservations about Owen's performance, other than his style. Despite Owen's 'lumbering literary gait' (44), Packer seems to believe that the Puritan divine spoke the last word on this subject. 'He was sure in his own mind that a certain finality attached to what he had written....' and, in Packer's view, 'Time has justified his optimism.'(45)

Thompson kindly described Owen's style as that of 'the elephant's grave and solid step', but he also agreed that 'The characteristic excellencies of Owen's mind shine out in this work with great lustre.... comprehension and elevation of view....intellectual strength....the presence and power of a heavenly spirit....'(46) Despite such a commendation, Thompson still questioned whether Owen has established

(42) Works, ed. Jackson (1841), Vol. 10, p.363.

(43) Works, Vol. 10, p.149.

(44) Op. cit., p.25. Subjective impressions in this respect vary interestingly. Gould says that Owen's style is 'deficient in grace and vivacity. His mode of discussing a subject is often tedious and prolix.' (op. cit., p.VII) Wood, Owen's contemporary, thought he had 'a great command of his English pen'.(Biographia Britannica, p.3295) Philip Doddridge thought Owen's style 'very obscure' yet 'it resembles St. Paul's'. (Works, Vol. 5, p.430.)

(45) Op. cit., p.23.

(46) Op. cit., p.XXXVIII.

'the whole truth' on the subject of the Atonement. Without doubting the efficacious particularity of the Atonement in the salvation of the elect, Thompson wondered whether Owen did justice to those biblical expressions which imply a more universal dimension to the Atonement. Of course, as Thompson points out, Owen believed in the infinite sufficiency of the Atonement as the basis for indiscriminate gospel invitations, but it seems that Owen's exposition at this point failed to completely satisfy Thompson.

^  
William Orme, writing a generation before Thompson, was even more specific. While granting that the Death of Death is distinguished 'by all that comprehension of thought, closeness of reasoning, and minuteness of illustration, which mark the future productions of the author' yet Orme was not entirely satisfied either. 'There is too much reasoning on the debtor and creditor hypothesis.'(47) In other words, Owen's doctrine of a limited atonement relies too heavily on the commercial analogies employed in the biblical description of sin. In short, sin is not a quantitative, but a qualitative concept. Like Thompson, Orme conceded that Owen believed in the infinite sufficiency of the Atonement as the basis for evangelistic proclamation, but he thought Owen's exposition of the subject was not always in harmony with this consideration.(48)

Goold is arguably as unhappy as both Thompson and Orme. He even attempts to excuse Owen by suggesting that the basis of evangelism

(47) Op. cit., p.59.

(48) Ibid, p.61.



'Was never formally before the mind of our author.'(49) This is not in fact true, and Owen makes himself perfectly clear on this point. How satisfactorily is yet to be determined. It must be said in passing that Orme rejected Owen's commercialism in favour of the Governmental theory of the Atonement, a view rejected by Owen himself. This is one of the issues to be discussed in this thesis.

Richard Baxter's contribution deserves partial consideration at this point, since he took issue with Owen in his Aphorismes of Justification (1649). At the heart of the commercial theory of the Atonement is the idea that Christ, by His death, 'paid' the debts of the elect on their behalf and, for that reason, no provision is made for the non-elect. Accordingly, Owen urged that Christ made the 'exact payment' demanded by the Law for the sins of the elect - the solutio ejusdem.(50) In an appendix to his Aphorismes, Baxter argued that, for a number of reasons, Owen's view was incoherent and that, by the nature of his mediation, Christ paid not the exact, but an equivalent payment - the solutio tantidem.(51) Baxter's basic point is that since human sin is threatened with eternal punishment, and Christ's sufferings were terminated by his resurrection, then it makes no sense to say that he paid the exact payment demanded by the Law. Realising that Baxter had touched on a matter of crucial importance for his entire argument, Owen responded with Of the Death of Christ, the Price He Paid (1650) (52). After confessing that he 'medled too forwardly

(49) Owen, Works, Vol. 10, p.141.

(50) Ibid, p.267.

(51) Op. cit., (1655 ed.), pp.301f.

(52) Works, Vol. 10, pp.429f.

with Dr. Owen'(53), Baxter resumed the argument in his Confession of Faith (1655). There he argues that the solutio ejusdem theory was 'at the bottom of antinomianism'. If Christ has satisfied the Law's demands in exact, quantitative terms, then believers may disregard the Law with impunity. This brought forth a further rejoinder from Owen in an appendix to his Vindiciae Evangelicae (1655) entitled Of the Death of Christ and of Justification.(54)

Thompson clearly questions the propriety of such 'scholastic phrases'(55) and William Cunningham failed to perceive the importance of the controversy.(56) This matter will be thoroughly discussed in this study. The terms are not as confusing to the modern mind as has been suggested, and their importance will become manifest. Indeed, the case for the doctrine of limited atonement hangs on this very issue.

In commenting on Owen's 'orthodox Calvinism', Toon is careful to note that the term 'Calvinism' is not being used to describe the theology of John Calvin himself.(57) The precise relationship between the views of the Puritan and those of the Reformer will be investigated later as an issue of considerable importance and interest. There can be no doubt that Owen believed he was advocating the same position as that adopted by Calvin and the other reformers of the sixteenth century.(58) R. T. Kendall has questioned whether Calvin's Calvinism and Westminster Calvinism can be regarded as the same thing (59) and

(53) RB I, p.107.

(54) Works, Vol. 12, pp.591f.

(55) Op. cit., p.XXXIX.

(56) Historical Theology (1862) (4th ed., 1960), Vol. 2, p.307.

(57) Op. cit., p.15.

(58) Dis. A., p.6; Works, Vol. 7, p.74; Vol. 3, p.229.

(59) Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 (1979). See the reply by Paul Helm, Calvin and the Calvinists (1982).

Norman Douty presents evidence from the Book of Common Prayer which makes Packer's support for Owen somewhat anomalous, in view of his own Reformed Anglican position.(60)

Owen's thesis in the Death of Death is opposed not only to Arminianism, but also to the 'hypothetical universalism' of the Saumur theologians in France - known as Amyraldianism after Moses Amyraldus, its leading exponent. Again, the assumption throughout is that this latter view is just another deviation from Reformed Orthodoxy. Owen fails to consider Moise Amyraut's claim in his Defense de la Doctrine de Calvin (1644) that it was 'Orthodox Calvinism' of the pre- and post-Dort era that had made the significant departures from Calvin's theology of the Atonement. The interesting question is, which of the contending theological positions is the true heir of Calvin's theology? When Packer says that 'Calvinistic thinking is the Christian being himself on the intellectual level'(61), he begs the question: What, therefore, is true Calvinism? Owen's assumption is therefore shared by Packer, who fails to do more than make a reference to the Amyraldian position.(62) He rightly links Baxter with this movement (63), since his activities in this country parallel the debate on the continent.(64) The claim therefore that Calvin's theology and seventeenth century 'orthodox Calvinism' are to be distinguished will be considered in particular relation to John Owen, as well as part of the general background to this study.

(60) The Death of Christ (1972), p.114f.

(61) Op. cit., p.10.

(62) Ibid, p.23.

(63) Baxter says in his Aphorismes (p.319), that he declined to pursue his 'small tract of Universal Redemption' in view of Amyraut's reply to Spanheim which 'opened my very heart, almost in my own words'. Baxter's manuscript was completed, but published posthumously in 1694.

(64) See Brian G. Armstrong, Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy (1969).

Turning to Owen's treatise The Doctrine of Justification by Faith (1677), this has, in a sense, a pre-history. It arose from the controversy with William Sherlock, the Rector of St. George's, Botolph Lane, who, seventeen years after its publication, wrote against Owen's Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (1657). Owen had argued that the imputation of Christ's active as well as his passive righteousness to the believer was the basis of his justification before God. Sherlock then asked 'That if the righteousness and obedience of Christ be imputed unto us, then what need we yield obedience ourselves?' Owen then published his Vindication, asserting a position he was to defend three years later in his main treatise on the subject. In 1658, a year after the treatise on Communion appeared, Owen was involved in the preparation of the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order. Chapter XI, 'Of Justification', shows a significant modification of the corresponding chapter in the Westminster Confession, on which the Savoy was largely modelled. Whereas the Presbyterian document could not justly provoke Sherlock's type of objection, the Independent one states the very position which Sherlock had criticised. Instead of 'the obedience and satisfaction of Christ' being imputed, as in the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration speaks of 'Christ's active obedience unto the whole Law' as well as his 'passive obedience in his death' being imputed 'as their whole and sole righteousness'.(65) The

(65) See op. cit., ed. Matthews, p.90. Criticism of the Savoy was far from muted. See Owen's reply to Pierre Du Moulin in The Correspondence of John Owen, ed. Toon (1970), Letter 92, pp.165f. For Du Moulin, see DNB.

significance of all this, and the degree to which Owen was able to refute the charge of an incipient antinomianism will be considered in the appropriate place.

It is interesting to note that, according to Baxter himself, the acceptance of the Savoy at the 1658 Assembly was due to the strength of minority opinion and the silence of others who, as they declared later, agreed with Baxter's sentiments, and that 'it was chiefly Dr. Owen's doing'.(66) Regarding the theology of the Savoy on the subject of justification, it is significant that whereas neither Baxter nor Wesley took exception to the Westminster version, they did have reasons for objecting to the Savoy statement. The reasons for this will be discussed in due course.

The importance of this background to Owen's treatise on Justification has a parallel with that on the doctrine of the Atonement. Just as significant differences are claimed between the Puritans and the Reformers on one subject, the same might be said of the other. Toon states that the 'orthodox' view of justification comprising of forgiveness of sin plus a further imputation of Christ's active righteousness, is to be attributed to Theodore Beza, and not to Calvin and the first generation reformers, who equated the imputation of righteousness with forgiveness.(67) Toon does not document this at any length, and the matter demands careful examination.

(66) See EC, p.226 and Catholick Communion Defended (1684), p.8.

(67) The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765 (1967), pp.15-16. It is surely interesting to ask to what extent Owen, as the leading exponent of Puritan Calvinism, contributed to the transition from Calvinism proper to eighteenth century hyper-Calvinism, with regard to both the doctrines under review in this thesis. Toon fails to deal with Owen's role in either respect, and this is arguably an important omission in his otherwise very valuable study of hyper-Calvinism.

The view of Armstrong, Kendall and others that Beza was also responsible for a fundamental alteration in the Reformation doctrine of the Atonement (68), confirms the suggestion that Beza's influence on the development of Reformed thought was fundamental and comprehensive.

Returning to Owen's treatise itself, Toon questions Perry Miller's widely accepted thesis that Puritan federal theology was a device to remove the 'harshness' of predestinarianism. In Owen's overall argument, the divine purpose in predestination figures prominently.(69) Accordingly, Packer views Owen's treatise as a 'classic work'(70), reinforcing Goold's 1851 comment that 'it is still the most complete discussion in our language' of the subject of Justification.(71) For all their obvious sympathy with Owen, both Orme and Thompson were constrained to offer criticism of his treatise. 'The great extent of this work is one of the strongest objections to it', wrote Orme. 'It is unfavourable to that simplicity with which the Bible states all its doctrines....It gives Divine truth too much the appearance of artificial or systematic arrangement, and by the very terms which it employs, exposes it to opposition, and oppresses it with explanations that impede rather than forward its progress.'(72) Thompson agreed with Orme that Owen's treatment of the nature of justifying faith tends to 'perplex'

(68) Kendall, op. cit., p.29 and Armstrong, op. cit., pp.37f.

(69) Toon, op. cit., p.170. See Sell, The Great Debate (1982), p.40.

(70) The Doctrine of Justification in Development and Decline Among the Puritans, in By Schisms Rent Assunder (Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference Report, 1969), p.19.

(71) Owen, Works, Vol. 5, p.3. Buchanan's The Doctrine of Justification (1867) made Goold's claim to a degree obsolete. See Packer's Introductory Essay.

(72) Orme, op. cit., pp.308-309.

an enquirer, although he is quick to point out that such a censure is not to be confined to Owen. In his view, on the subject of faith, 'The Puritan divines, with their scholastic distinctions, were far inferior to the theologians of the Reformation.'(73) This study will be concerned to examine the evidence on which these remarks are based, and to consider their numerous and far reaching implications. This will provide a perspective on Owen's place in British theology, and afford a basis for an important comparison with the views of John Wesley, and the 'middle-way' theologians, Baxter and Tillotson.

(73) Thompson, op. cit., p.XCVI. See J. I. Packer, The Puritan Treatment of Justification by Faith, EQ, April, 1952, pp.131-143.

## II: Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

### 1. His significance

If John Owen was 'the leading figure among Congregational divines' (74), Richard Baxter is described as 'the outstanding figure among ejected ministers'.(75) He is justly famous for his energetic pastoral ministry at Kidderminster during the period 1641-1660. He was equally noted for his distinctive theological and ecclesiastical position, in which he advocated the 'middle way' between irreconcilable extremes. A prophet of ecumenical comprehension, Baxter was less successful in ending the Protestant fragmentation of his day than in his evangelistic activities. However, his 'pacific vision' has earned him just renown, even if his methods were deficient in realism and common sense.

Baxter's autobiography, the Reliquiae Baxterianae (76) provides a mine of detailed information, enabling subsequent biographers to fully portray the man. However, this work is 'a confused and shapeless hulk', to quote the words of J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, who published the first true abridgement of it earlier this century (77). Edmund Calamy's Abridgement of 1702 was not strictly what it claimed to be, since the account was re-written as a third person record (78). In addition to William Orme's full and useful biography (79) and J. C.

(74) Calamy Revised, A. G. Matthews (1934), p.376.

(75) Ibid, p.39. See DNB.

(76) RB. This is usefully discussed from a literary standpoint in Owen C. Watkins, The Puritan Experience (1972), pp.121-143. See also G. F. Nuttall, Richard Baxter's Correspondence: a preliminary survey, JEH, Vol.1, No. 1, Jan. 1950, pp.85f.

(77) An Autobiography of Richard Baxter, being the Reliquiae Baxterianae, edited with an introduction and notes (1931).

(78) This work was very largely the basis of the useful account of Baxter's life in Biographia Britannica, Vol. 1 (1747), pp.557-565.

(79) Life of the author in The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter (1830), Vol. 1.



Ryle's valuable essay (80), the twentieth century provides studies by A. R. Ladell (81), F. J. Powicke (82), G. F. Nuttall (83) and N. H. Keeble (84).

The very complexity of Baxter's personality, and inconsistent nature of his accomplishments are reflected in the conflicting judgements made about him. Inevitably, the remarks of commentators reveal their prejudices: Baxter is praised or blamed according to what aspect of his achievement appeals to them. To J. I. Packer, Baxter was 'the most outstanding pastor, evangelist and writer on practical and devotional themes that Puritanism produced'(85), yet 'as a theologian, he was, though brilliant, something of a disaster.' (86) Writing from a similar standpoint, W. N. Kerr is persuaded that 'Baxter, without intention, demonstrated Arminian tendencies'(87), a conclusion which, in the minds of some, has disqualified Baxter forever. Such verdicts reflect the current revival of interest in the type of theology espoused by John Owen, and they will be subject to scrutiny in due course.

Older assessments were more generous. To Lord Morley, Baxter was 'the profoundest theologian of them all'(88), and the historian S. R. Gardiner thought him 'the most learned and moderate of the

(80) Richard Baxter in Light From Old Times (1902 ed.), pp.303-342.

(81) Richard Baxter: Puritan and Mystic (1925).

(82) A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691 (1924) and The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross (1662-1691), (1927).

(83) Richard Baxter (1965).

(84) Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters (1982).

(85) Introduction to The Reformed Pastor, ed. William Brown (1974 rep.), p.9.

(86) The Doctrine of Justification in Development and Decline Among the Puritans, p.27.

(87) The Encyclopedia of Christianity, ed. Palmer (1964), Vol. 1, p.605.

Dissenters'(89). C. E. Surman reflects current ecumenical aspirations when he describes Baxter as 'an outstanding theologian and ecclesiastical leader' and 'would-be apostle of Christian peace'(90). These conflicting judgements confirm the impression that the versatile and many-sided Baxter cannot be neatly categorised. N. H. Keeble declares that Baxter has proved an elusive figure. 'Modern scholars claim him as both Puritan and Anglican; as representative of the central moderate Puritan and as its 'stormy petrel'; as a rationalist and a mystic; as a Calvinist and an Arminian; as a fully integrated personality and as an 'utterly self-divided man''(91).

G. F. Nuttall sees Baxter as an 'individual figure', as 'one who agreed with most men about some things but could never agree with any of them about everything'.(92) In his own lifetime, Baxter exasperated those who insisted on rigid theological categories. In the years following his death, his individualism was identified as 'Baxterianism'(93) and a distinct 'middle-way' tradition was to emerge by this name. (94) This thesis will be concerned to assess whether Baxter's via media was a theological disaster or a coherent Biblical alternative to the contending theologies personified by John Owen and John Wesley.

It is Baxter's doctrinal contribution therefore which will demand attention in this study, rather than his more practical and

(88) Given in J. M. Lloyd-Thomas, op. cit., p.vii.

(89) Ibid.

(90) Richard Baxter (1961), pp.11,19.

(91) Op. cit., p.22.

(92) Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in a tradition (1952), p.1,2. See also R. D. Whitehorn, Richard Baxter, Catholic, PHSE, Vol. VI, No. 2, May,1937, pp.99f.

(93) See The Paraselene Dismantled, of Her Cloud, or Baxterianism Barefac'd, by Thomas Edwards (1699).

(94) See Nuttall, supra; also F. J. Powicke, Richard Baxter's 'Via Pacis', PHSE, Vol. II, No. 2, May, 1921, pp.36f.

devotional one. Nonetheless, a glance at the latter is not entirely out of place. It would have pleased Baxter to see the truly 'catholic' appeal of his Saints Everlasting Rest, Call to the Unconverted and The Reformed Pastor. Indeed, these and other writings have earned the respect of many across the theological and ecclesiastical spectrum. Of Matthew Henry, the famous Bible expositor, J. B. Williams wrote 'The practical works of Mr. Baxter, especially, occupied a very exalted place in his esteem; they are more frequently cited in his manuscripts than the productions of any other author....'(95) Among the eighteenth century Dissenters, young Philip Doddridge was full of admiration for 'Mr. Baxter's incomparable writings'(96), declaring that 'Baxter is my particular favourite.'(97) In his maturity, Doddridge confessed of Baxter that 'He is inaccurate, because he had no regular education' yet still he is 'The English Demosthenes - His works are very proper for conviction - See his Saint's Rest - all his treatises on conversion, especially his Call to the Unconverted.... Few were ever instrumental of awakening more souls.'(98) Doddridge considered the Reformed Pastor to be a 'most extraordinary performance'.(99)

John Wesley wrote of 'honest Richard Baxter', calling him that 'loving, serious Christian'.(100) He published abridgements of

(95) Memoirs of the Life....of the Rev. Matthew Henry (1828) (1974 rep.), p.221.

(96) Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge, ed. J. D. Humphries (1829), Vol. 1, p.368.

(97) Ibid, p.460.

(98) Works, ed. Williams and Parsons (1802-5), Vol. 5, p.431.

(99) Cited by Packer, op. cit., p.5.

(100) Works, ed. Jackson (1842), Vol. 2, p.312.

Baxter's Aphorismes of Justification and the Saints' Everlasting Rest, remarking of the Reformed Pastor that it was 'worth a careful perusal.'(101) His own Anglicanism notwithstanding, Wesley could still commend the nonconformist spirit of those 'excellent men, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Howe and Dr. Calamy.'(102) George Whitefield's early reading included Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, which 'much benefited me'(103) and during a visit to Kidderminster in 1743, he wrote to a friend 'I was greatly refreshed to find what a sweet savour of good Mr. Baxter's doctrine, works and discipline remained to this day.'(104) As for the Baptists, Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich (1766-1832) wrote of The Saints' Rest that 'it has not a single dry page in it. I think it one of the best practical books I ever read....'(105) The eminent C. H. Spurgeon sought refreshment after preaching by asking his wife to read the Reformed Pastor to him. '....perhaps that will quicken my sluggish heart.'(106)

The Anglicans have proved no less enthusiastic. In William Brown's 1829 edition of The Reformed Pastor, Daniel Wilson, later Bishop of Calcutta, could say, 'It is peculiarly gratifying to (me), as an Episcopal clergyman, to introduce the manly and eloquent pages of this great Nonconformist divine.'(107) Hugh Martin agreed with Archbishop Trench that in The Saints' Everlasting Rest, there is

(101) Ibid, Vol. 8, p.290.

(102) Ibid, Vol. 10, p.481.

(103) Journal, ed. Murray (1960), p.62.

(104) Works (1771), Vol. 2, p.47.

(105) Martin Hood Wilkin, Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich (1855), p.126.

(106) The Early Years (1897), (1962 ed.), p.417.

(107) Op. cit., p.vi.

'a robust and masculine eloquence'.(108) Despite his strictly theological antipathy, J. I. Packer can still write that 'Baxter was a great and saintly man; as a pastor, evangelist, and devotional writer, no praise for him can be too high.'(109) It is hardly surprising, in view of these selected eulogies, to find a modern Congregational scholar like Dr. Nuttall admitting that Baxter was his 'master'.(110) In a sense, Dr. Johnson expressed a universal verdict which appears to still hold good. Speaking of Baxter's works to Boswell, he exclaimed 'read any of them; they are all good.'(111)

## 2. His Life

Richard Baxter was born at Rowton, Shropshire in 1615. His upbringing was not characterised by the advantages enjoyed by the younger Owen. Although he was educated at Wroxeter, and privately at Ludlow, Baxter was denied the benefits of a university training. However, his personal piety was influenced by puritan and other authors, and, after studying theology under Francis Garbet of Wroxeter, he was ordained by the Bishop of Worcester in 1638. At the same time, he was licensed to teach at Richard Foley's school at Dudley. Baxter became a curate at Bridgenorth, 1639-40, during which time his sympathy for nonconformity was aroused by the 'Et caetera oath'.(112) In 1641, he accepted an invitation to become curate at Kidderminster, where he was to exercise an extraordinary

(108) Puritanism and Richard Baxter (1954), pp.127-8.

(109) Op. cit., (Puritan Conference Report, 1969), p.27.

(110) Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), His Contribution to English Religion (1952), p.154.

(111) Boswell's Life of Johnson, Intr. Sir Sydney Roberts (1960), Vol. 2, p.472.

(112) During the primacy of Archbishop Laud, various measures were adopted to stem the tide of Puritanism. The Convocation of

pastoral ministry.

With the advent of the Civil War, Baxter's support for the Parliament incensed the Royalists of Worcestershire. His life being threatened, he became an army chaplain at Coventry from 1642 to 1645. After the Battle of Naseby (1645), he was invited to serve as a chaplain in Colonel Whalley's regiment. This six year acquaintance with religious life in the army found Baxter opposed to its rampant sectarianism. Antinomianism was rife, with an emphasis on the doctrines of grace at the expense of moral character. This experience profoundly influenced Baxter's conception of the Christian life.

Baxter left the army in 1647 and lived for a while at the home of Sir Thomas Rouse, during which time he was seriously ill. Though indisposed, Baxter's first two books were conceived at this period. In 1649, he returned to Kidderminster to resume his ministry. His first book, Aphorismes of Justification was published that year. This was also the first of Baxter's many forays against antinomianism. In an appendix, he criticised John Owen's Death of Death (1648).<sup>(113)</sup> The famous Saints' Everlasting Rest appeared the following year. Numerous practical and polemical works were published during the Kidderminster years, including Rich: Baxter's Confession of His Faith (1655) <sup>(114)</sup>, Gildas Salvianus: The Reformed Pastor (1656-7), Of

(112) continued/ 1640 passed a number of canons, the sixth being the famous 'Et caetera oath'. It aimed at preventing 'all innovations in doctrine and government', in defiance of both Rome and the Puritans. The latter were alarmed at having to subscribe to 'nor will I ever give my consent to alter the government of this church by archbishops, bishops, deans, and archdeacons, etc., as it stands now established....' The question then was, what might the 'etc.' include? See W. H. Hutton, A History of the English Church (1903), pp.82-84.

(113) See Owen's reply, Of the Death of Christ, the Price He Paid (1650), in Works, Vol. 10, pp.429f.

Justification (1658), A Call to the Unconverted (1658) and The True Catholick and Catholick Church Described (1660).

In 1660, Baxter left Kidderminster for London. He was involved in plans to restore Charles II to the throne, and he preached before Parliament at St. Margaret's Westminster that year. After the Restoration, Baxter became a chaplain to the King, and was offered the bishopric of Hereford, which he refused. He took prominent part at the Savoy Conference of 1661, even drawing up a Reformed liturgy. (115) Baxter attempted to return to Kidderminster, but this was prevented, and shortly before the Act of Uniformity was passed in May, 1662, he bade farewell to the Church of England in a sermon at Blackfriars. In September of that eventful year, Baxter married Margaret Charlton.

After living for a while at Moorfields, Baxter and his wife retired to Acton in Middlesex. During the period 1662-1669, Baxter published The Divine Life (1664) and Reasons for the Christian Religion (1667). He was also engaged in discussions with John Owen about Nonconformist unity, but differing conceptions about the nature of the church and doctrinal subscription made progress impossible.(116)

Baxter shared the sufferings of the Nonconformists, being imprisoned for a week at Clerkenwell in 1669, and for twenty-one

(114) Baxter again wrote against Owen in this work. Owen responded with Of the Death of Christ and of Justification (1655); see Works, Vol. 12, pp.591f.

(115) See A Petition for Peace: with the Reformation of the Liturgy (1661)

(116) See The Correspondence of John Owen, ed. Toon (1970), pp.136f.

months at Southwark in 1684-86. The second imprisonment is associated with Baxter's trial at the hands of the notorious Judge Jeffreys, in which he was accused of libelling the Church of England in his Paraphrase of the New Testament (1685). He knew suffering of a more personal kind too, when his wife died in 1681. Baxter published A Breviate of the Life of Margaret Baxter the same year.

Baxter was a reluctant Nonconformist. He was always interested in schemes for the comprehension of Nonconformists within the Established church. In 1674, he drafted a Bill for comprehension with John Tillotson, hoping that moderation on both sides might prevail.(117) Such schemes were kept alive until 1689, but the Convocation of that year showed a greater sympathy with 'high church' sentiments than with the 'liberal' views of Tillotson, Baxter and the Presbyterians.(118)

The last twenty years of Baxter's life saw no abatement of his literary activity. His publications reflect a continuing concern for church unity, practical piety and theological concensus. Cure of Church Divisions (1670), A Christian Directory (1673) and Richard Baxter's Catholick Theologie (1675) are representative. This latter work, a heavy folio, contains the sum of Baxter's theological solutions to the controversies of the day. It reveals an eclectic via media between the high Calvinism of theologians

(117) See RB III, p.110, 157.

(118) See F. Procter and W. H. Frere, A New History of the Book of Common Prayer (1929), pp.206f.



like John Owen and the Arminianism later to be embraced by John Wesley. Further important works are A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness (1676), Naked Popery (1677), The Nonconformists' Plea for Peace (1679), A Treatise of Episcopacy (1681), Methodus Theologiae Christianae (1681), Richard Baxter's Dying Thoughts (1683) and Catholic Communion Defended (1684).

In the closing years of his life, Baxter was further engaged in disputes over antinomianism, occasioned by the republication of Tobias Crisp's sermons in 1690. This led him to publish The Scripture Gospel Defended (1690). Baxter's final theological compendium was An End of Doctrinal Controversies (1691), published in the year of his death. Important posthumous publications were Universal Redemption (1694), a treatise on the nature and extent of the atonement (119), and his autobiography, The Reliquiae Baxterianae, edited by Matthew Sylvester (1696). N. H. Keeble lists a total of 141 publications of Baxter's, not to speak of collections of his sermons and prefaces to works by other authors.(120) The last works published in his lifetime, Richard Baxter's Penitent Confession and The Certainty of the World of Spirits are symbolic of the author's essential humility, and the 'other worldliness' of one who lived and laboured that he and others might enjoy 'the saints' everlasting rest'.

(119) Baxter wrote the MS of this work during the earlier disputes with Owen. However, he considered his work superfluous in view of similar works by Amyraut and others already available.

(120) Op. cit., pp.156f. See also A. G. Matthews The Works of Richard Baxter (1932).

### 3. His Works

Unlike Owen, whose views on the subjects under review tend to be confined to a few separate treatises, Baxter expressed his thoughts copiously and repeatedly in numerous publications. He even admitted that 'fewer well studied and polished had been better' than the plethora of his hasty productions. 'I wrote them', he says, 'in the crowd of all my other employments, which would allow me no great leisure for polishing and exactness, or any ornament; so that I scarce ever wrote one sheet twice over, nor stayed to make any blots or interlinings, but was fain to let it go as it was first conceived.'(121) In this respect, as well as his tedious analytical method, Baxter was open to the charge he frequently levelled at others, that of 'over-doing'. Powicke, who lists this as a fault which impaired Baxter's influence, admits that he simply shared 'the common Puritan abuse of the inherited scholastic way' but that in Baxter's case, 'it was carried to a singular length'.(122) Keeble disagrees, on the grounds that Baxter refused 'to pass over difficulties or to spare the reader, eschewing all over-simple solutions, neglecting nothing....'(123) As Baxter urged so frequently himself, the truth is probably 'half-way'. He certainly aimed in his polemical writings at a 'thorough simplicity' of verdict, since, as he wrote in 1670, 'It is SIMPLE CATHOLICK CHRISTIANITY which I plead for....'(124) However, the exhaustive 'thoroughness' of

(121) RB I, p.124.

(122) Op. cit. (the second volume), p.253.

(123) Op. cit., p.67. For Baxter's own literary influences, see G. F. Nuttall, A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue, JEH, Vol. II, No. 2, July, 1951, pp.207f and Vol. III, No. 1, Jan., 1952, pp.74f.

(124) Ibid, p.24.

treatment tended to dominate the 'simplicity', resulting frequently in something less than perspicuity.

As with so much associated with Baxter's career and contribution, paradox is never far away. In his controversial pieces, his aim was peace, but his style and method promoted antagonism. It is true that he sought 'the churches' peace' (125), but he was charged with giving occasion to 'many contentions'.(126) Yet Baxter was totally unrepentant as to method, even if he did lament his tendency to use provocative language. In the preface to his Catholick Theologie, he presents this self-justification. 'If you say, physician heal thyself: Who hath wrote more of controversies? I answer, peruse what I have written, and you will see, it is of controversies, but against controversies, tending to end and reconcile....I have meddled much with controversies in this book, but it is to end them.' This led to the title of Baxter's final controversial work, An End of Doctrinal Controversies (1691), being a summary of all his major theological views.

It is difficult not to imagine, despite his protestations to the contrary, that Baxter enjoyed theological debate. With regard to John Owen, Fisher says of Baxter, 'Undoubtedly he was fond of breaking a lance with the great Independent.'(127) Baxter was aware of his natural genius and was hardly reluctant to exercise it. He

(125) Nuttall, op. cit., p.65.

(126) Powicke, op. cit., p.234.

(127) The Writings of Richard Baxter in Bibliotheca Sacra (1851), Vol. 9, p.309.

had 'an astounding capacity for instant analysis' says Packer, and 'he could run rings round anyone in debate.'(128) However, it is being less than fair to Baxter not to acknowledge that he engaged in controversy for practical and pastoral ends. He believed that truth supported his conclusions, but mere victory in debate was never his object. His one concern was to clarify those theological issues which, when misunderstood, led to practical errors and difficulties. If any one issue persuaded Baxter to adopt a polemical stance, it was antinomianism. As Keeble writes, 'For the man who declared 'Practical divinity....my soul doth live on, and is the happiest part of my learning', there was one controversy which could not be ignored. The antinomian challenge, which Baxter detected not merely in libertine extremism, but in any version of Calvinism which regarded man's moral effort and obedience as incidental to salvation, posed such a threat to the nature of true Christianity as to demand attention.'(129) This one issue gave Baxter no rest. His first book, Aphorismes of Justification (1649), was his opening shot in a number of engagements, and, in the last year of his life, The Scripture Gospel Defended (1690) proved to be his parting one.

Little sympathy has been shown towards Baxter's views on justification. From the beginning, although his Aphorismes was

(128) Introduction to The Reformed Pastor (1974 ed.), p.9.

(129) Op. cit., p.69.

directed at antinomians, many who had nothing but contempt for libertine ideas of grace thought Baxter had gone too far in the direction of legalism. Baxter sought to discredit his opponents by insisting that Christians were not lawless when saved by grace. Thus he presented the Gospel as a 'new law' and that the obedience of faith was the 'righteousness of a Christian'. Good works were construed as 'part of the condition on which Christ's righteousness becomes ours'. To many, such ideas appeared to sail dangerously close to Roman Catholic conceptions of salvation, thus sacrificing the Reformation theology of salvation by grace alone.

Accordingly, Orme wrote of Baxter's Aphorismes, 'To this language, no man who understands aright the gratuitous justification which is through faith in the blood of Christ, will ever subscribe.'  
(130) Powicke thought Baxter 'fails' to comprehend the nature of grace by insisting that 'faith is the great Master duty of the Gospel to which all the rest are reducible.' In short, Baxter dwells too much on 'duty' to the neglect of 'grace', in Powicke's view. 'His insistence on the moral claims of the Gospel are admirable' but they should be seen as 'the fruits of a life in One with whom the Christian is in vital fellowship through faith. Faith in this Pauline sense, is something he did not apprehend.'(131)

In like manner, Martin argues that Baxter 'was right to

(130) Op. cit., p.448.

(131) Op. cit., p.135.

insist on the moral demands of Christian discipleship, but he seemed to fail to understand that there were other, and truly Pauline, ways of insisting upon a redemption through grace in no way dependent upon or earned by 'good works' and yet essentially producing them.'(132) C. F. Allison believes that the ambiguities of Baxter's theory of justification arose because 'He never.... really came to grips with the criticism of his interpretation of the formal cause of justification.'(133) Packer describes Baxter's insistence that 'law-keeping' is relevant to the earning of acceptance and salvation as an 'odd mistake' and that 'he never got this streak of legalism out of his theological system'.(134) Kerr specifically says that 'Baxter's idea of justification was in parts closer to the Romanist than the common Protestant view.'(135)

These criticisms of Baxter reveal considerable unanimity. However, in the course of the analysis, their validity will be tested. They certainly concur with the general response to Baxter's Aphorismes when the book first appeared. Such was the hostility shown, that Baxter retracted the book. He announced this in his Confession of His Faith(1655). The author's sensitivity is obvious when he admits, 'I find that there are some incautelous passages in my Aphorismes, not fitted to their reading that come to such poison, and seek for a word to be a matter of accusation and food for their

(132) Op. cit., p.135.

(133) The Rise of Moralism (1966), p.162.

(134) The Doctrine of Justification in Development and Decline Among the Puritans, op. cit., p.26.

(135) Op. cit., p.604.

censuring opinionative zeal.'(136) Although Baxter sought to remove the most objectionable expressions from his earlier statement, there was no fundamental change.(137) Orme was correct to say that Baxter 'adhered to the substance of its sentiments to the last.'(138)

With regard to Baxter's critics, a preliminary comment will be useful. All the criticisms cited above share a common deficiency. They fail to examine the biblical exegesis on which Baxter bases his conclusions. He himself tells us that, while writing the Saints' Rest, he had been impressed by the 25th. chapter of Matthew's Gospel, where final salvation takes account of the believer's obedience to Christ. 'I went to the Scripture, where its whole current, but especially Matthew 25 did quickly satisfy me in the doctrine of justification.'(139) As will be argued later, Baxter's position is largely unacceptable so long as certain assumptions remain unquestioned. Baxter's view that obedience to Christ is relevant to justification along with trust in Christ derives from his overall conception of faith. In the Aphorismes he wrote that 'As accepting of Christ for Lord is as essential a part of justifying faith as the accepting Him for our Saviour, so consequently sincere obedience (which is the effect of the former) hath as much to do in justifying us before God as affiance

(136) Preface, (p.xxxv).

(137) In the Preface to his Catholick Theologie (1675), Baxter reflected on his Aphorismes thus: 'And being young, and unexercised in writing, and my thoughts yet undigested, I put into it many uncautelous words (as young writers use to do) though I think the main doctrine of it sound.'

(138) Op. cit., p.448.

(139) CT, Preface, p.iv.

(which is a fruit of the latter).'(140)

Keeble, though not professing to comment as a theologian, is aware of this key observation when he quotes Baxter's assertion that justifying faith is a 'practical or working faith'.(141) Even then, Baxter's deeper biblical reason is not made plain. Furthermore, it is suggested that Baxter makes more consistent sense of the Reformation view of Christ's three-fold office of Prophet, Priest and King, than those who insisted that justifying faith only relates to Christ as priest. Baxter therefore argues that 'There is no justification by a partial faith.'(142) If Christ is king to His people, then subjection to His authority is as essential to Christian experience as trusting in His priestly mediation.

If there has been an insufficient evaluation of Baxter's biblical exegesis, it is also suggested that the true source of confusion in his theology has been missed. What has been regarded as erroneous might be substantially correct, although Baxter's analytical procedure and terminology prevent this from being apparent. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that certain assessments of Baxter's position can only be sustained by neglecting significant evidence in his writings. This is not to pretend that Baxter can be entirely vindicated, but to suggest that an important mistake in his theology arises from a neglected quarter. But this is to anticipate the analysis.

(140) Op. cit., p.69.

(141) Op. cit., p.71.

(142) CT, Bk. I, ii, p.86.



Baxter's involvement with John Owen over the nature and extent of the atonement has already been outlined. It was noted then that Baxter's treatise on Universal Redemption was published posthumously in 1694. The MS was with-held from publication in the 1650's 'partly because many narrow minded brethren would have been offended with it,' and partly because it would have needlessly duplicated the work of Bishop Davenant, Moise Amyraut and Jean Daille, the two latter being from the Academy of Saumur.(143) Even then, Baxter's views are sufficiently evident in the Aphorismes and the Confession, a fact which occasioned an attack on his position by Louis du Moulin, Camden Professor of History at Oxford. Baxter is singled out as being Amyraut's 'only proselyte in England', but Baxter retorted that the facts were otherwise. Indeed, it is plain from his Aphorismes that Baxter was convinced about universal redemption before he heard of Amyraut.(144) Elsewhere, he says, 'I meet with so many of Amyraldus mind in the point of universal redemption, that if I might judge of all the rest by those of my acquaintance, I should conjecture that half the divines in England are of that opinion.'(145) Baxter then cites such eminent names as bishops John Davenant and Joseph Hall, who had been among the British delegates at the Synod of Dort, as well as Archbishop Ussher, John Preston, and Dr. Samuel Ward. Baxter hastens to add that the version of

(143) RB, I, p.123. See Armstrong, op. cit...

(144) Op. cit., p.319. For du Moulin, see DNB.

(145) The Preface to Certain Disputations of Right to the Sacraments (1658).

universal redemption espoused by himself and others was different from Arminian universalism, viz. 'universal redemption in a middle sense' - 'That Christ died for all men, so far as to purchase them pardon and salvation on condition they would repent and believe; and for the elect, so far further as to procure them faith and repentance itself.'(146)

Baxter questions du Moulin's assertion that 'all the divines of the Assembly at Westminster were against Amyraldus method' since he knew several personally who 'profest themselves for the middle way of universal redemption'. Baxter also denies that the Westminster Confession (Chapter 8: V and VIII) (147) asserts the thesis 'Christ died for the elect alone', arguing that the confession's statement was deliberately worded to avoid such a necessary conclusion.(148) In short, it does not say that no provision is made for mankind generally. The strength of Baxter's case here depends upon the absence of a strictly negative verbal declaration but it is not difficult to infer from the Confession's statement the view he is objecting to. However, Baxter is not merely arguing from silence, in view of the information he provides.

If Baxter is correct in his assessment of the Westminster Assembly, then it is not surprising to learn of the high praise

(146) Ibid.

(147) The atonement is said to purchase salvation 'for all those whom the Father hath given unto' Christ, and the benefits of redemption are applied 'To all those for whom Christ hath purchased' them.

(148) 'And I have spoken with an eminent divine, yet living, that was of the Assembly, who assured me that they purposely avoided determining the controversy, and some of them profest themselves for the middle way of universal redemption.' Ibid. See Minutes of The Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, ed. A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers (1874), and Histories by Hetherington (1834), Mitchell (1883) and Beveridge (1904). Also, James Reid, Memoirs of the Westminster Divines (1811, 1815).

he expresses for it. In his view, the Confession did not necessarily endorse the doctrine of limited atonement. His evidence is therefore of great importance, especially in view of the fact that the most the Minutes reveal is that the subject was discussed. It is surely arguable from the documentary evidence that the 'middle-way' was officially rejected. However, Baxter understood matters otherwise, judging by his remarks about the Assembly. 'The Divines there congregate were men of eminent godliness and learning....the Christian world....had never a Synod of more excellent divines (taking one thing with another) than this Synod and the Synod of Dort were.'(149)

Some would judge Baxter's reference to the Synod of Dort an even more surprising concession. W. H. Goold, Owen's editor, thought it difficult to reconcile Baxter's rejection of Owen's view of the atonement with his admiration for the divines of Dort.(150) Indeed, Baxter's words are truly remarkable when he declares 'In the article of the extent of redemption, wherein I am most suspected and accused, I do subscribe to the Synod of Dort, without any exception, limitation, or exposition, of any word, as doubtful and obscure.'(151) However, the reason is not difficult to discover. While Article 8 of the second canon asserts that the 'saving efficacy' of the atonement extends to all the elect, and that only the elect are 'effectually' redeemed, Article 3 declares that the atonement

(149) RB, I, p.73.

(150) Owen, Works, Vol. 10, p.430.

(151) Given in Orme, op. cit., p.456.

'is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.'(152) A question therefore arises. If Baxter could acquiesce in the theology of Dort, how could Owen justify his similar commitment?(153) The answer is, that the language of the second Canon is, even more so than Westminster's equivalent statement, sufficiently ambiguous for Owen and Baxter to interpret the articles as they do. It will be seen in due course that the theology of Dort is not so extreme as its popular interpretation would suggest.(154) It is certainly more 'moderate' than both the theology of Owen and the Westminster Confession.

Curt Daniel is only partially correct to say that Owen was 'in agreement with Dort'(155), but his assertion that the Synod explicitly stated particularism (i.e. Owen's thesis) in 'classic terms'(156) is totally questionable, in view of Baxter's unqualified affirmation of its theology. Daniel fails to note the wording (157) of Article 8, which speaks of the divine purpose to 'effectually redeem' the elect. As will be seen, Owen's exposition of 'redemption' places him at odds with the actual wording of Dort since, in his view, 'effectual redemption' is mere tautology. 'Redemption' is effectual by definition. On the other hand, Baxter does not question the ultimate salvation of the elect alone, but he does believe that the redemptive provision of the atonement is wider than its 'effectual' application. For Baxter,

(152) The Three Forms of Unity (The Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort) (n.d.), p.37.

(153) The Nature and Causes of Apostacy, Works, Vol. 7, pp.74-75.

(154) See J. R. de Witt, The Arminian Conflict and the Synod of Dort, in The Manifold Grace of God (Puritan Conference Report, 1968), p.17.

(155) Hypercalvinism and John Gill (Ph.D, Edinburgh, 1983), p.533.

(156) Ibid, p.524.

(157) Ibid, p.525.

this all important distinction had practical ramifications for evangelism. In short, Baxter interprets Dort as implying a general redemptive provision in the atonement, notwithstanding its restricted, 'effectual' application to believers. He was far from being alone in this view, a fact borne out by the views of Bishop Davenant, himself an English deputy at the Synod of Dort. It is interesting to note Owen's impatience with those who questioned the views of the English bishops at the Synod on the subject of regeneration (158), when he himself summarily rejected Davenant's Dissertation on the Death of Christ as being 'repugnant unto truth itself'.(159) This treatise is important vis-a-vis Owen and Baxter, and will receive attention in due course.

As has been noted, Baxter defies any neat categorisation. Attempts to place him reveal considerable perplexity. Orme was confident that 'no man' should 'question or deny the Calvinism of Richard Baxter'(160), whereas Fisher says with equal confidence 'he can hardly be styled a Calvinist'.(161) The uncertainty has continued, for Kerr asks 'Was Baxter a Calvinist?' concluding with Dowden that he was 'too Arminian for the high Calvinists and too Calvinistic for the Arminians.'(162) Martin accordingly calls Baxter a 'liberal Calvinist'(163) and Keeble says 'Though we may wonder that Baxter could say 'I am no Arminian', it is no surprise

(158) HS, p.229.

(159) Of the Death of Christ, Works, Vol. 10, p.432.

(160) Op. cit., p.436.

(161) Op. cit., p.307.

(162) Op. cit., pp.603-604.

(163) Op. cit., p.134.

to find him denying whole-hearted allegiance to Calvin....'(164)

Keeble's reference to Calvin himself is incorrect, and it raises an important question. Whereas many, recognising Baxter's individualism, have resorted to calling him a 'Baxterian'(165), it is worthwhile asking where Baxter stands in relation to Calvin and his theology. Of Calvin personally, Baxter's eulogy possesses no ambiguity. 'I know no man, since the Apostle's days, whom I value and honour more than Calvin, and whose judgement in all things, one with another, I more esteem and come nearer to.'(166) In view of the various groupings such as 'moderate Calvinists', 'High Calvinists', 'Hypercalvinists' and 'Strict Calvinists' - all claiming some degree of affiliation with the reformer's theology, the need for careful definition is essential. This is a useful exercise in any event, but it has added relevance where Baxter is concerned. In other words, what is the precise relationship between 'Baxterianism' and Calvin's 'Calvinism'?

The question thus posed is important in the context of a debate of growing importance in contemporary scholarship. There is nothing new in the observation that Calvin's own theology and later Calvinism are different. All schools are agreed on this, but the nature of the difference has been variously understood. Is it merely one of emphasis, or of character? Were the developments in Calvinistic

(164) Op. cit., p.72.

(165) See Powicke, The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross (1662-1691), (1927), p.233f. and G. F. Nuttall, Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: a study in a tradition (1952).

(166) Quoted in Philip Schaff, The History of the Christian Church, (1883), Vol. 8, p.136. (Tributes to the Memory of Calvin)

theology consistent with Calvin's explicit statements, or do they show significant departures from them? Contributions by L. Proctor (167), B. Hall (168), B. G. Armstrong (169), N. F. Douty (170), R. T. Kendall (171), P. Helm (172), W. H. Chalker (173) and C. Daniel (174) help to further clarify these questions. In addition, they shed light on the question of Baxter's entitlement to the appellation 'Calvinist' and assist in testing the validity of Baxter's claim to satisfactorily mediate between the High Calvinism of Owen on one hand, and the Arminianism later embraced by John Wesley on the other.

- (167) The Theology of Moise Amyraut considered as a reaction against seventeenth century Calvinism (Ph.D, 1952).
- (168) Calvin against the Calvinists in John Calvin, ed. G. E. Duffield (1966).
- (169) Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy (1969)
- (170) The Death of Christ (1972)
- (171) Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 (1979)
- (172) Calvin and the Calvinists (1982)
- (173) Calvin and Some Eighteenth Century English Calvinists (Ph.D, 1961)
- (174) Hypercalvinism and John Gill (Ph.D, 1983)

### III: Archbishop Tillotson (1630-1694)

#### 1. His significance

Archbishop Tillotson is probably the least well known of the four theologians being studied in this thesis, in which case, a slightly fuller account of his significance will not be out of place.

Like Baxter among the Puritans, Dr. John Tillotson represents the policy of 'moderation' within post-Restoration Anglicanism. As with his puritan friend and contemporary, Tillotson was unsuccessful in reconciling the extremes of opinion he sought long to unite. He is probably the most famous example of that religious outlook known as 'Latitudinarianism'.<sup>(175)</sup> J. R. H. Moorman perfectly expresses all that Tillotson - together with Stillingfleet (1635-1698), Wilkins (1614-1672), Bull (1634-1710), Burnet (1643-1715) and others - stood for when he says 'They were, on the whole, broad minded men, tired of controversy and the intensity of religious feeling in which they had grown up and anxious for a quiet life in the pursuit of goodness and righteousness. They believed intensely in reason, and had the utmost dislike and contempt for the various forms of ecstatic individualism which were then beginning to be known as 'Enthusiasm'.<sup>(176)</sup>

Biographical studies of Tillotson have been generally few and slight. The Life by Thomas Birch is the only strictly biographical

(175) See G. R. Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason (1966), pp.61f.

(176) A History of the Church of England (1953), p.255. See also W. H. Hutton, A History of the English Church, From the Accession of Charles I to the Death of Anne (1625-1714), (1903), For Stillingfleet and others, see DNB.



account of substance to date.(177) Burnet preached and published a funeral sermon which, though highly eulogistic, is useful (178) and Tillotson's pupil John Beardmore wrote a memoir (179), published as an appendix by Birch. The earliest biography proper was written by Francis Hutchinson (180), and a concise account by William Nichols, arguably superior to Birch's fuller and detailed work, appeared in the Biographia Britannica (181). Apart from the sketch by Moffatt (182), the most recent study of Tillotson is by Louis G. Locke.(183)

Tillotson was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in his sixty-first year. His primacy was short and uneventful, yet Hunt considers that Tillotson was 'the wisest and best man that ever sat in the primatial chair of Canterbury.'(184) Carpenter writes that 'If character in itself qualified for office, no man could have had greater claims to Canterbury than John Tillotson. He was intelligent, liberal and warm hearted.'(185)

- (177) The Life of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury....(1752)
- (178) A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of....John....Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (1695)
- (179) Memorials of John Tillotson
- (180) The Life of the Most Reverend Father in God John Tillotson Archbishop of Canterbury (1717)
- (181) Vol. 6, Part 1 (1763), pp.3944-3954. See also DNB (1898)
- (182) The Golden Book of Tillotson (1926)
- (183) Tillotson: a Study in Seventeenth Century Literature in Anglistica (1954), Vol. 4.
- (184) Religious Thought in England (1871), Vol. 2 p.99.
- (185) Cantuar: The Archbishops and their Office (1971), p.226.

The Archbishop's most enduring claim to fame seems to be as a preacher. He was possibly the only Primate who took front rank in his day as a preacher. However, his performance in this area has not received unqualified praise. Indeed, one contemporary critic accused the late Archbishop of undermining Christianity. 'His religion is latitudinarian, which is none; that is, nothing positive, but against everything that is positive in other religions; whereby to reduce all religion to an uncertainty....and....to call in question all revelation.'(186) On the other hand, Richard Baxter thought Tillotson 'preached well'(187), being one of 'the best and ablest of the Conformists'.(188) Bishop Burnet not only endorses Baxter's verdict, he also explains why others felt differently. 'He had the brightest thoughts and the most correct style of all our divines, and was esteemed the best preacher of the age....But there was so little superstition and so much reason and gentleness in his way of explaining things, that malice was long levelled at him, and in conclusion broke in fiercely on him.'(189)

Lord Macaulay wrote that 'Of all the members of the Low Church party, Tillotson stood highest in general estimation. As a preacher he was thought by his contemporaries to have surpassed all rivals living or dead. Posterity has reversed this judgement. Yet Tillotson still keeps his place as a legitimate English classic.'(190) Davies

(186) The Charge of Socinianism Against Dr. Tillotson (1695), p.13.

(187) RB, II, p.437.

(188) RB, III, p.19.

(189) The History of My Own Time, I, Chapter 6, given in Moffatt, p.iv.

(190) History of England (1967 rep.), Vol. 3, pp.170-171.

candidly writes that 'from the vantage point of the present day' it is 'exceedingly difficult to understand his renown.'(191) James Downey is of the same mind; however, he concedes that it is 'almost impossible to exaggerate the influence of Tillotson upon eighteenth century theology and preaching....The years 1720-40 are the period of greatest vogue for Tillotsonian theology and ethical preaching.' (192) Even as late as 1778, Dr. Johnson was reluctant to question Tillotson's standing as a model for preachers. 'I should be cautious of objecting to what has been applauded by so many suffrages.'(193)

Davies volunteers the suggestion that Tillotson's success 'comes from his correct anticipation of the prevailing religious and homiletical taste of the century succeeding his own.'(194) However true this may be, it does not explain the Archbishop's popularity during his lifetime. Cragg places his contribution in the context of the Puritan Revolution. 'The recent excesses of certain of the Puritan sects had left all sober men with an ingrained horror of 'fanaticism'. They reacted against the 'enthusiast' and all his ways. Over against unregulated inspiration - a force unpredictable and beyond control - the Latitudinarians set the authority of reason.'(195)

R. Tudur Jones is correct to observe that 'The plain, carefully modulated prose of Tillotson corresponded well with the demands of

(191) Worship and Theology in England from Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1603-1690 (1975), p.182.

(192) The Eighteenth Century Pulpit (1969), p.24.

(193) Boswell's Life (1960 rep.), Vol. 2, p.179.

(194) Op. cit., p.182.

(195) Op. cit., p.64.

the new science for a precise and unambiguous medium of expression.'

(196) However, Moffatt thought it inadequate to see Tillotson merely as the spokesman for his age. He quotes approvingly Sir Leslie Stephen's view that 'for the time, reason and Christian theology were in spontaneous alliance.'(197) Tillotson set forth Christianity 'as a claim on ethical obedience and intelligent opinion' according to Moffatt. However, he was no mere apologist. 'Tillotson's defense is an attack; it is the instinctive movement of a living mind in religion....his tenacious statement of reasonable Christianity was timely and trenchant. His excellence lay in seeing that this involved moral requirements as well as mental.'(198)

To a much greater degree than Baxter, Tillotson was accused of rationalism and moralism in his theology. To what degree the Archbishop suppresses spiritual considerations and the Pauline emphasis on grace is worth investigating. However, Louis G. Locke says that 'Tillotson's religion led unintentionally toward Deism'(199) and it is certain that the Deists applauded the Archbishop's stress on the 'reasonableness' of Christianity.(200)

Even allowing for the important qualification that Tillotson, like his contemporary John Locke, argued for a 'supernatural rationalism' i.e., miracles were 'above' reason though not 'contrary' to it (201), it is interesting to note the affinity between the

(196) Congregationalism in England, p.130.

(197) English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (1876), Vol. 1, p.79.

(198) Op. cit., p.35.

(199) Op. cit., p.110. See J O'Higgins Archbishop Tillotson and the Religion of Nature, JTS, Vol. XXIV, Part 1 (April, 1973), pp.123-142.

(200) See Cragg, op. cit., p.81.

(201) See A. C. McGiffert, Protestant Thought Before Kant (1913), pp.199-200, and Locke, op. cit., p.108.

Dissenters and Tillotson. The Archbishop's puritan origins, his early sympathy with presbyterianism and his life long desire of comprehending the more moderate Dissenters within the state church clearly explain much of this. Davies acknowledges that, in addition to the rationalism of the Cambridge Platonists, Tillotson's style 'combined the seriousness of the Puritans.'(202)

Baxter's commendation of Tillotson has already been noted. For some, this might confirm their suspicions about Baxter. However, none could seriously question the fervent evangelicalism of men like Matthew Henry and Philip Doddridge, who both regarded Baxter and Tillotson highly. While studying law at Grays Inn, Henry heard many of the London preachers. Of all the sermons he sampled, Henry comments, 'There are not many desirable. Dr. Tillotsons are the best.'(203) In 1708, during the writing of his celebrated Exposition of the Bible, Henry made reference to 'That great man Archbishop Tillotson.'(204) In 1721, three years before he acquired Baxter's works, Philip Doddridge declared to his brother-in-law 'In practical divinity, Tillotson is my principal favourite....'(205) Even after Baxter became the dominant influence in Doddridge's development, the young divine still held Tillotson's sermons in high esteem.(206) When lecturing to his own students in later years, Doddridge alluded to more than the 'beautiful simplicity' of Tillotson's style. 'He had some puritanical expressions.'(207)

(202) Op. cit., p.181.

(203) J. B. Williams, Memoirs....of the Rev. Matthew Henry (1828), p.25.

(204) Op. cit.,(1886 ed.), Vol. 2, p.v.

(205) Correspondence, ed. J. D. Humphries (1829), Vol. 1, p.44;  
Calendar, ed. Nuttall, Letter 8.

(206) 'Doctor Tillotson has also prepared an admirable sermon, which he will quickly deliver in my chamber with his usual grace and sweetness.' Correspondence, Vol. 2, p.139.

(207) Lectures on Preaching in Works, Vol. 5, p.435.

Not all eighteenth century evangelicals shared Doddridge's estimation of the Archbishop's sermons. Notwithstanding their warm and respectful regard for Doddridge (208), George Whitefield and John Wesley were thoroughly antagonistic towards Tillotson. In their view, the very latitudinarianism of Tillotson and his colleagues had been responsible for the spiritual lethargy of the Church of England. Remembering that the philosopher David Hume's sceptical rejection of miracles had been influenced by the very type of reasoning Tillotson had employed against transubstantiation (209), Louis G. Locke is correct to conclude 'If on one hand rationalism led eventually to scepticism, on the other, it certainly produced the reaction which we know as the great revival movement of the following century, of which Methodism is a large part.'(210) The features of the Methodist attitude towards Tillotson will be touched on shortly, particularly as it relates to the subject of this thesis.

## 2. His Life

John Tillotson was born at Sowerby near Halifax, Yorkshire, in 1630. His father was a prosperous clothier and a convinced Puritan. After receiving a grammar school education, first at Colne, in Lancashire, and then at Halifax, John entered Clare Hall, Cambridge, in 1647. His tutor was the Presbyterian divine David

(208) See G. F. Nuttall, Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge D.D. (1702-1751) (1979), p. xxxxiif, and my Philip Doddridge and the Oxford Methodists in WHS, Vol. XLII, Part 3 (1979), pp.75-80.

(209) See Enquiries, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (1963), p.109, and Till. III, pp.314-315.

(210) Op. cit., pp.110-111.

Clarkson (211) and he shared rooms with Francis Holcroft. The Master of Clare was Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688), one of the 'Cambridge Platonists'. Tillotson was more attracted to the Puritans at this time. Their intellectual keenness impressed him. He was an avid reader of William Twisse (d. 1646) and an admirer of Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679). Between graduating B.A. in 1650 and M.A. in 1654, Tillotson became a Fellow of his college. His acquaintance with the rational, apologetic strain of William Chillingworth's (1602-1644) The Religion of Protestants reinforced his interest in theological eclecticism.(212)

At this time, Tillotson's sympathies were decidedly presbyterian. He also supported the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. In 1656, he left Cambridge to become tutor to the son of Sir Edmund Prideaux, Cromwell's attorney-general. Tillotson was in London at the time of the Protector's death in 1658, and he was present on a fast day at Whitehall a week later, when he heard Thomas Goodwin and Peter Sterry impugn God and His providence in allowing Cromwell's death. John Owen, then Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, was also present.(213) This incident promoted Tillotson's growing disenchantment with Puritanism.

(211) See DNB. Clarkson preached John Owen's funeral sermon in 1683. See Toon, God's Statesman, p.173.

(212) For Holcroft, see G. F. Nuttall, Cambridge Nonconformity 1660-1710: From Holcroft to Hussey in URC, Vol. 1, No. 9, April, 1977. For Goodwin, see Calamy Revised; and for Cudworth, Twisse and Chillingworth, see DNB.

(213) Toon shares Orme's suspicion that Burnet's account of these devotions is prejudiced and unreliable. (Op. cit., p.103) However, Burnet's information came from Tillotson, who was not known to indulge in misrepresentation.

Tillotson's personal attachments began to change, and during a visit to London in 1660 by Dr. Thomas Sydserf, the Bishop of Galloway, he was ordained. His episcopal orders notwithstanding, Tillotson was ejected from his fellowship of Clare. He was also present at the Savoy Conference in 1661 as an auditor with the Presbyterian Commissioners. In the same year he preached at St. Giles, Cripplegate in one of the 'morning exercises', in the absence of Dr. William Bates, another eminent Presbyterian.(214) With the passing of the Act of Uniformity, Tillotson conformed, thus severing his formal associations with the Presbyterians.

After a brief curacy in Hertfordshire, Tillotson was for a year Rector of Kedington in Suffolk. His ability in preaching was attracting attention, which led to his election as preacher at Lincoln's Inn and an appointment as Tuesday lecturer at St. Lawrence Jewry in 1664. In the same year he married Mrs. Elizabeth French, a niece of Oliver Cromwell, and step-daughter of Dr. John Wilkins, Rector of St. Lawrence Jewry. Tillotson's first famous sermon, The Wisdom of Being Religious was preached and published that year. During 1669, he became royal chaplain and prebendary of Canterbury. In 1672, he was made Dean of Canterbury, and three years later, prebendary of St. Paul's.

Tillotson was frequently engaged in controversy over Roman

(214) See The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate, or Several Cases of Conscience practically resolved by Sundry Ministers (1661). The first sermon is by Dr. Samuel Annesley (John Wesley's grandfather), then minister of St. Giles, and the tenth is by Tillotson.



Catholicism. This commenced with The Rule of Faith (1666), the only formal treatise that he ever published (215), and for which he was created D.D. A significant proportion of Tillotson's sermons were directed against Rome, a fact not appreciated by the King. The Hazard of Being Saved in the Church of Rome (1672) (216), preached at Whitehall, resulted in the permanent absence of the Duke of York from the chapel royal thereafter. Other polemical sermons were A Discourse against Transubstantiation (217), The Protestant Religion Vindicated (1682) (218), Of Constancy in the Profession of the True Religion (six sermons) (219), The Vanity and Wickedness of Honouring Dead Saints and Persecuting the Living (220) and Christ Jesus the Only Mediator between God and Men (1691)(three sermons) (221). The 'Popish plot' of 1678 occasioned Tillotson's sermon before the House of Commons On the Fifth of November (222). Following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, he gave warm support to the French Protestant refugees.

Tillotson never totally lost his puritan sympathies. He maintained close friendships with the leading Nonconformists. The idea of comprehending them within the state church always appealed to him. In 1674, he jointly drafted a Bill for Comprehension with Richard Baxter.(223) However, support from the king and the bishops

(215) Till. III, p.649.

(216) Ibid, p.119.

(217) Ibid, p.297. The argument referred to by David Hume (see Enquiries, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (1963), p.109), which the philosopher then used against miracles, appears on pp.314-315. See my criticism of Hume in Orthodoxy and the Enlightenment (Newcastle M.Litt, 1977), pp.83-95.

(218) Ibid, p.318.

(219) Till. I, pp.30f.

(220) Ibid, p.195.

(221) Ibid, pp.125f.

was not forthcoming. In 1678, he preached at the Yorkshire Feast (224), urging the Church of England to make concessions to the Non-conformists. For this he was severely criticised. Tillotson also took an interest in the efforts of the Nonconformist Thomas Gouge for promoting education and evangelisation in Wales.(225) He also apologised to William Penn, the Quaker, for having supported the suspicions that he was a Jesuit.

On the advent of the Revolution of 1688, Tillotson was invited to preach thanksgiving sermons before the Prince of Orange at St.James and at Lincoln's Inn.(226) With the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689, he and his friends promoted another comprehension scheme, and a bill was laid before Parliament. Tillotson persuaded the King to summon Convocation, and a commission met to consider possible concessions to the Nonconformists. Extensive alterations to the Book of Common Prayer found favour with many. However, 'high' church opinion prevailed in Convocation and the reforming measures were rejected.(227)

Tillotson's sermon Of the Eternity of Hell Torments (228), preached before Queen Mary at Whitehall in 1690, resulted in considerable odium for the preacher. He was unjustly accused of undermining

(222) Till. III, p.201.

(223) See RB, III, pp.110, 157.

(224) Till. III, p.211.

(225) See Tillotson's funeral sermon for Gouge (1681) (Ibid, p.251), who was the son of the eminent Puritan William Gouge (d. 1653). See Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (1957), pp.67f.

(226) Till. III, p.373.

(227) See F. Proctor and W. H. Frere, A New History of the Book of Common Prayer (1929), pp.206f. The measures proposed in 1689 have not proved entirely fruitless. The Free Church of England, formed in 1863 in protest against Tractarianism within the established church, adopted a modified Prayer Book along the lines of the 1689 proposals. See A History of the Free Church of England (1960), pp.171f.

the doctrine by arguing that the divine threatenings are primarily conditional. His 'deterrent theory' was misunderstood, and viewed with suspicion. The Life of Jesus Christ considered as our Example (1686) (229) and The Precepts of Christianity not Grievous (230) were seen as specimens of Tillotson's eudaemonistic view of Christianity. He was thought to have departed from the theology of the Reformation in Of the Nature of Regeneration and its Necessity, in order to Justification and Salvation (231) and Of the Christian Faith which Sanctifies, Justifies and Saves (232). John Wesley was to take exception to Tillotson's views.(233)

Tillotson had been appointed Dean of St.Paul's early in 1689. After much reluctance, he agreed to become Archbishop of Canterbury in 1691. Throughout his brief primacy, he conscientiously sought to uphold the Act of Toleration. Despite his liberalism and kindness, Tillotson's 'reasonable' theology aroused suspicions of Socinianism. He revised and published four sermons entitled Concerning the Divinity and Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour in 1693 (234), which failed to satisfy some of his critics. Weary of controversy, he endeavoured to promote domestic piety in Of Steadfastness in Religion (235). The

(228) Till. III, p.409.

(229) Till. II, p.221.

(230) Till. III, p.70.

(231) Till. I, pp.365f.

(232) Till. II, p.474.

(233) See True Christianity Defended (1741), in Works, Vol. 7, p.433.

(234) Till. III, p.505.

(235) Ibid, pp.581f.

Archbishop's final sermon was Of Sincerity towards God and Man (236) preached a few months before his death in November, 1694. When he died, King William declared 'I have lost the best friend that I ever had, and the best man that I ever knew.' (237)

### 3. His Works

Unlike Owen and Baxter, Tillotson published only one theological treatise, The Rule of Faith (1666). This is an apologia for the Protestant doctrine of Holy Scripture vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition. The work is conspicuously different from everything else Tillotson ever produced. The vast majority of his works consist entirely of sermons. This is not meant to imply that Tillotson avoided theological issues or that his contribution may be ignored. Indeed, the contrary is true. What is significantly different is the manner in which he handled controversial subjects. For exhaustiveness of treatment, Tillotson's sermons on the atonement and justification do not begin to compare with the treatises of Owen and Baxter. However, as will be seen, his contribution demands consideration, for all its relative brevity. Since his orthodoxy has been suspected by conservative scholars, it will be important to examine briefly certain aspects of his wider contribution, to demonstrate why his theological position is worthy of attention in this thesis.

(236) Till. I, p.1 f.

(237) Given in Moffatt, op. cit., p.25.

Much has been written about Tillotson's style. It was famous for simplicity of thought, clarity of expression and lucidity of argument.(238) While Owen's sermons are more readable than his treatises, and Baxter's 'practical style' is eminently more palatable than his tedious analytical method, neither of the two Puritans can compare with the direct and simple style of Tillotson. (239) What is more significant is that he deals with doctrinal subjects without the aid of metaphysical distinctions and intricate reasonings. This was, of course, deliberate policy. The elaborate theological treatise was left well alone. Tillotson believed religion had become excessively scholastic and controversial. Simplicity was his aim in the pulpit. He 'thought the less men's consciences were entangled, and the less the communion of the church was clogged with disputable opinions or practices, the world would be the happier, consciences the freer, and the church quieter.'(240)

It is true that Tillotson's sermons lack the fulness of Owen's biblical expositions and the passionate directness of Baxter's. Indeed, the heroic note is generally missing and the element of urgency is muted. However, criticism of Tillotson is not always justified. It is true that the 'atmosphere' of his sermons is often rational and moral, but not to the exclusion of all else. His deep suspicion of excessive emotion is plain. In this, there

(238) See W. F. Mitchell, English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson (1932), pp.121f; Horton Davies, op. cit., p.182; James Downey, op. cit., pp.1-29; Norman Sykes, From Sheldon to Secker (1959), pp150f; and Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century (1934), pp.256f; L. G. Locke, op. cit., p.112f; Arthur Pollard, English Sermons (1963), pp.26f; G. R. Cragg, op. cit., pp.83-4.

(239) See his contemporary Robert South's scathing attack on such early caroline divines as Andrewes and Taylor, and also the Puritans, in Works (1823), Vol. 3, pp.33-34.

(240) Gilbert Burnet, A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of John, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (1695), p.31.

is clear evidence of an over-reaction to what he believed were the extravagances of the later puritan era. This being granted, it is incorrect to describe Tillotson's sermons as 'frigid moral essays', without charm or interest (241). Neither Moffatt (242) nor Pollard (243) agree with this popular conception of Tillotson's pulpit performances, and evidence is not wanting to substantiate their dissent. In The Necessity of Repentance and Faith, we are told

In the blood of Christ we may see our own guilt, and in the dreadful sufferings of the Son of God, the just desert of our sins; 'He hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows, .... He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; therefore the commemoration of His sufferings should call our sins to remembrance, the representation of His body broken should melt our hearts; and so often as we remember that His blood was shed for us, our eyes should run down with rivers of tears; so often as we look upon Him whom we have pierced, we should mourn over Him. When the Son of God suffered, the Rocks were rent in sunder; and shall not the consideration of those sufferings be effectual to break the most stony and obdurate heart? (244)

This one statement makes Davies' verdict appear a questionable generalisation when he says 'It was left to the Latitudinarians to conceive of a contradiction - Christianity without tears.'(245) The extract quoted above is worthy of Owen and Baxter and not untypical of Wesley's utterances. It is puritan and evangelical piety at its best. However, Tillotson believed that such an emphasis was only a part of the New Testament conception of the Christian life. Piety must entail practice, and this he believed was a frequently

(241) See W. H. Hutton, The English Church from the Accession of Charles I to the Death of Queen Anne, 1625-1714 (1903), p.300 and The Cambridge History of English Literature (1912), Vol. 8. p.303.

(242) Op. cit., p.37.

(243) Op. cit., p.28.

(244) Till. II, p.7.

(245) Worship and Theology in England, Vol. III, p.56.

neglected principle. One cannot pretend that the extract is common in Tillotson, but his sermons are never without some degree of warmth. For all their restraint, they are far from being arid dissertations.

The extract quoted above serves to illustrate another important feature of Tillotson's sermons. The sequence of biblical references (246) within the quotation is not incidental. Tillotson, no less than Owen and Baxter, was a meticulous expositor of Scripture. In this respect, he remained a Puritan to the last. His critics apparently fail to notice that, even in those matters wherein Tillotson's theology has been most suspected, he is always expounding a text of Scripture. He often preached on texts and subjects which had been neglected by others. In this he was seeking to compensate for what he regarded were serious deficiencies. A case in point is the oft criticised sermon The Precepts of Christianity not Grievous (247), 'easily', says Downey, 'the most popular sermon in eighteenth century England.'(248) While commending Tillotson and his colleagues for re-asserting the need for morality in the decadence of Restoration society, Sykes accuses them of reducing it to the level of 'prudence' and 'worldly wisdom'.(249) Sykes further argues that this outlook adapts 'the demands of Christianity to the infirmities of unregenerate human nature', promising 'the consolations of religion to the weakest

(246) Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 26:28; Lamentations 2:18; Psalm 119:136; Revelation 1:7; Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 27:51.

(247) Till. III, pp.70f.

(248) Op. cit., p.15.

(249) From Sheldon to Secker, p.150.

of its professors.'(250) Davies is even more severe. Tillotson's style 'reduced Christianity to rationalism and moralism, the former diluting faith and the latter abandoning grace.'(251)

Despite the extracts they quote from Tillotson's sermon, Sykes and Davies are arguably superficial. Surely, Tillotson should only be penalised if he seeks to make Christianity attractive at the expense of Scripture. It is surely not mere 'prudence' and 'worldly wisdom' to argue from Christ's exhortations to 'love our neighbour as ourselves'(Matthew 22:39) and 'to do to others as we would have them do to us'(Matthew 7:12), as Tillotson does.(252) It is hardly adapting Christianity to 'unregererate nature' to state the necessity of 'repentance', 'the mortification of lusts and passions', 'humility', 'patience', 'contentedness', 'forgiveness and love of enemies' and 'self denial for the cause of God and religion' as Tillotson does.(253) He is not 'diluting faith' and abandoning grace' when he argues:

'Tis true we have contracted a great deal of weakness and impotency by our wilful degeneracy from goodness, but that grace which the Gospel offers to us for our assistance is sufficient for us. And this seems to be the particular reason why the Apostle says here in the text that 'His commandments are not grievous', because he offers us an assistance proportionable to the difficulty of His commands and the necessity of our condition: for it follows immediately after the text, For whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world. Therefore, the commandments of God are not grievous, because every child of God, that is, every Christian, is endued with a power whereby he is enabled to resist and conquer the temptations of the world.' (254)

(250) Church and State, p.262.

(251) Worship and Theology in England, Vol. II, p.184.

(252) Op. cit., p.71.

(253) Ibid, pp.72-73.

(254) Ibid, p.73.



The ultimately important question therefore becomes, is Tillotson adequately expounding Scripture? He is, after all, preaching from I John 5:3 'And His commandments are not grievous,' strangely called by Davies a 'relaxing text', without giving an alternative exegesis of it. As such, his criticisms of Tillotson leave much to be desired. It is interesting to note that John Calvin's exposition of the text is virtually identical to Tillotson's. The reformer attributes all 'difficulty' in the Christian life, not to 'the nature of the Law but from the vice of our flesh.' Calvin also says that the 'sweetness and delight' suggested in the text only applies to those 'whom God begets again by His Spirit....John confines these words, God's commandments are not grievous, to God's children, lest anyone should take them generally.' Again, like Tillotson, Calvin concludes 'that the Law is called easy in so far as we are endowed with heavenly power and overcome the lusts of the flesh.'(255) This is the essential thrust of Tillotson's sermon. Indeed, there is nothing in this sermon inconsistent with another entitled The Necessity of Supernatural Grace, in order to a Christian Life.(256)

Davies further fails to appreciate Tillotson's expository method in the three sermons The Life of Jesus Christ considered as our Example(1686) (257). 'No other age would surely have presumed to give Jesus Christ a testimonial of good character, or so

(255) See Tillotson, Ibid, p.76 and Calvin's Comment on I John 5:3, tr. T. H. L. Parker (1961), p.300.

(256) Till. II, p.319.

(257) Till. II, pp.221f.

deftly to remove the 'scandal of the cross' from the record', writes Davies. Tillotson is accused of giving an 'urbane portrait of the founder of Christianity' and of losing 'God's sheer generosity in grace and the paradox of the God-man' in the 'all-too-human picture of the Incarnate Son of God.'(258)

It is clearly arguable that Tillotson was attempting to correct an imbalance. It was common in his day for Christ to be preached as Lord and Saviour, but not as Example. It was predictable that those who highlighted the latter should be thought of as moralisers. However, Tillotson's text could not be more explicit. '- leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps.'(I Peter 2:21) This is the all-important dimension so often ignored by Davies and others, that of biblical exegesis. In the passage objected to by Davies, ('The virtues of his life are pure....Humility without meanness of spirit....wisdom without cunning....Resolution in that which was good....'), Tillotson is simply giving substance to the frequently neglected truth of our Lord's real humanity and personal character. Even out of context, the passage in question does not justify Davies' criticism. Tillotson is merely fulfilling the role of an expositor, describing our Lord's character within the terms of the New Testament evidence.

Seen in the context of the three sermons, Tillotson's

(258) Op. cit., Vol. III, pp.56-57.

portrayal of Christ is beyond reproach. Only two paragraphs later, the preacher declares 'This pattern which our religion proposeth to us is the example of one whom we ought to reverence, and whom we have reason to love above any person in the world; 'tis the Example of our Lord and Master, of our Sovereign and our Saviour....'(259) Tillotson reveals no desire to 'remove the scandal of the cross from the record' when he says 'He that requires us to forgive our enemies, shed his own blood for the forgiveness of our sins; while we were enemies to him, laid down his life for us, making himself the example of that goodness, which he commands us to show to others.' (260) Neither does Tillotson suppress the paradox of the Incarnation when he asks (with an obvious reference to Paul's christological statement in Philippians 2) 'Can we be proud, when the Son of God humbled himself and became of no reputation; emptied himself of all his Glory, and was contented to be despised and rejected of men?'(261)

Remembering the limited object Tillotson had in view in these sermons, which were not intended to be expositions of the incarnation and atonement as such, one must seek for Tillotson's christology elsewhere. His sermons on The Divinity and Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour (1679-80) and The Sacrifice and Satisfaction of Christ (1693) were published to combat rumours that Tillotson favoured Socinianism. No candid mind can fail to detect the Archbishop's decided convictions

(259) Op. cit., p.241.

(260) Ibid, p.242.

(261) Ibid, p.242.

regarding the deity of Christ and his substitutionary atonement, although some were not convinced.(262) This introduces us to his attitude to 'reason'.

Some objected that Tillotson was too courteous to the Socinians. He acknowledged that they disputed 'with a very gentle heat, and few hard words' but that they have 'this one great defect, that they want a good cause and truth on their side.'(263) What some regarded as too concessionary a tone was misunderstood. What might appear as weakness in Tillotson's 'cool' and 'rational' refutation of Socinianism was, in fact, his great strength. He frequently maintained that if a controversialist is persuaded of the truth of his cause, then there is no need to be 'fierce' and 'out of temper'. In short, excessive 'heat' might argue a lack of confidence in one's arguments. Furthermore, an opponent is denied the excuse of ignoring one's arguments on the grounds of personal abuse, if the tone of debate is objective.

It was natural enough for the advocates of orthodoxy to suspect those who appealed to reason. After all, the Socinians had argued that such doctrines as the incarnation and the trinity were both above and contrary to reason. Tillotson's 'supernatural rationalism' admitted the former, but not the latter. He frequently argued not only the injustice of 'branding' those as Socinians who appealed to

(262) See DNB, p.397.

(263) Till. III, p.521.

rational argument in the defense of the faith, but that the only alternative was an absurd irrationalism. 'But if this be Socinianism, for a man to enquire into the grounds and reasons of the Christian religion, and to endeavour to give a satisfactory account of why he believes it, I know no way but that all considerate inquisitive men, that are above fancy and enthusiasm, must be either Socinians or Atheists....'(264)

Again, Tillotson is consistent with Scripture. Commenting on I Peter 3:15, where the Apostle urges Christians to 'answer every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you', Tillotson says 'If ye be questioned for being Christians, be ready to own your profession, and give a reason of it.'(265) Furthermore, the Apostle Paul describes living to the glory of God as 'reasonable (logikos) service'.(Romans 12:1)

Cragg is correct to say that the Latitudinarians were 'more ready to praise reason than to define it'.(266) Their conception seems to amount to 'the use of rational faculties in the perception of facts and the evaluation of arguments'. They certainly shunned the kind of secular rationalism of a later age, when unaided human reason became the sole arbiter of all that was possible. Tillotson believed that 'religion is necessary to purify our minds' (267) and that the Christian's sanctified intelligence was an integral part

(264) The Efficacy, Usefulness and Reasonableness of Divine Faith, p.464.

(265) Ibid, pp.376-7.

(266) Op. cit., p.65.

(267) The Advantages of Religion to Particular Persons, Till. III, p.51.

of his experience.

Tillotson and his school were not alone in asserting the importance of reason. Richard Baxter and John Owen also shared this emphasis. Baxter even places reason in the context of grace. 'Reason as reprieved in order to recovery, and reason as illuminated are certainly a sort of common grace....'(268) In Owen's The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity Explained and Vindicated (1668), he, like Tillotson, argues that 'Many things are above reason....which are not at all against it.'(269) In The Reason of Faith (1677), Owen's 'supernatural rationalism' is much in evidence.(270) W. H. Goold is incorrect to say that Tillotson's 'greater rationalism' implied a sufficiency in reason apart from divine influences.(271) Tillotson, like Baxter and Owen, insists that sin has not suspended our rational faculties, but that the Holy Spirit is still necessary to 'illumine the mind' and 'remove the impediments which hinder our effectual assent to the Gospel.'(272)

It is paradoxical that Tillotson, rather than Owen, has been viewed as the rationalist. Unlike Owen, Tillotson repudiated Aristotelian logic in favour of the a posteriori, inductive reasoning of the new empiricism. He was less doctrinaire than Owen, whose theology was significantly influenced by the older a priori, deductive scholasticism.

(268) CT, Bk. 2, p.160. See Powicke's discussion of Baxterianism with respect to Baxter's view of reason in The Rev. Richard Baxter Under the Cross, pp.238f.

(269) Works, Vol. 2, p.411.

(270) Ibid, Vol. 4, pp.7f.

(271) Ibid, p.4.

(272) Of the Testimony of the Spirit to the Truth of the Gospel, Till. II, p.456.

As has been pointed out, Tillotson's theology exhibits clear signs of over-reaction to both the older scholasticism and the 'enthusiasm' of the Puritans. As a man of peace, he avoided committing himself in the debates over predestination and election. In this respect, Tillotson's version of 'moderation' is a little left of centre compared with Baxter's position. His hand in Burnet's Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles (1699) reveals a concern to tolerate both the Arminian and Calvinist schools of thought, to the exclusion of Pelagianism and Antinomianism.(273) In view of the official Anglican commitment to the doctrines of predestination and election (Article XVII), Tillotson's policy was, though understandable, inadequate and unconvincing. At this point, John Owen's theology is more satisfactory, and Baxter's version of 'moderation' more persuasive. His moderation notwithstanding, it is still true - as Philip Doddridge observed - that Tillotson 'had some puritanical expressions'. His commitment to the Gospel of Grace is obvious in The Necessity of Gospel Obedience and its Consistence with Free Grace.(274)

This background has been necessary in order to place Tillotson's contribution in its proper context, and to rescue his theology from much unjustified opprobrium. His very definite biblicism qualifies him to be considered along with Baxter as a possible middle-way

(273) Op. cit., (1841 ed.), p.227.

(274) Till. I, pp.502f.

theologian in this thesis. However, his views on the doctrines of atonement and justification are yet to be assessed. His sermons on Grace (275), Regeneration (276) and Faith (277) are particularly important in view of George Whitefield's comment, attributed by him to John Wesley, that Tillotson 'knew no more about Christianity than Mahomet'.(278) It is suggested that Wesley's criticism of Tillotson's sermons on justification requires very careful evaluation, in view of the fact that, despite his protest, Wesley's mature views approximate very closely to those of the Latitudinarian Archbishop.

(275) Till. II, pp.319f.

(276) Till. I, pp.365f.

(277) Till. II, pp.474f.

(278) Luke Tyerman, The Life of George Whitefield (1876), Vol. 1, p.360.



IV: John Wesley (1703-1791)

1. His significance

Of all the theologians being studied in this thesis, John Wesley is least in need of introduction. His significance is seen in the ever increasing corpus of literature associated with his life and work. Unlike Owen, Baxter and Tillotson, Wesley is almost a household name. No other Christian denomination honours the name of its founder more than the Methodist Church honours John Wesley. To Methodists, May 24th is 'Wesley Day' - the date of his evangelical conversion in 1738. In 1893, the new Methodist History Society was called the Wesley Historical Society. Wesley has become therefore, something of a cult figure. J. C. Ryle wrote a century ago that 'If ever a good Protestant has been practically canonised, it has been John Wesley.'(279) After nearly two centuries since his death, there is no decline of interest in the life and contribution of John Wesley. The wide ranging nature of his influence is reflected in the comments of public figures, secular historians and Christian leaders of all denominations. No study of the eighteenth century can ignore the influence of John Wesley. His own conservatism notwithstanding, the rise of political radicalism cannot be explained without reference to him, and he occupies a place of unequalled eminence in the history of the Christian Church. By any standard, John Wesley was

(279) Christian Leaders of the Last Century (1978 rep.), p.64.

a rare phenomenon. Luke Tyerman appears just in concluding that 'Taking him altogether, Wesley is a man sui generis. He stands alone: he has had no successor.'(280)

There can be no doubt that John Wesley has had a universal appeal. Eminent men in literature and public life have paid tribute to his versatility and prowess. Lord Macaulay considered that Wesley's 'eloquence and logical acuteness might have rendered him eminent in literature' and his 'genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu.'(281) W. E. Gladstone wrote that Wesley's 'life and acts have taken their place in the religious history not only of England, but of Christendom.'(282) Mr. David Lloyd George (betraying not a little ignorance of the unique character of Welsh Methodism as distinct from English Methodism) asserted that Wales 'owed more to the movement of which Wesley was the inspirer and prophet and leader, than to any other movement in the whole of its history.'(283) Mr. Stanley Baldwin said that historians of the eighteenth century 'who filled their pages with Napoleon and had nothing to say of John Wesley, now realise that they cannot explain nineteenth century England until they can explain Wesley.' (284) Augustine Birrell considered that Wesley was 'the greatest force of the eighteenth century'(285) and Sir Charles Grant Robertson thought him 'the most striking of eighteenth century figures.'(286)

(280) Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley (1872), Vol. 3, p.660.

(281) Ibid, p.660.

(282) Given in Skevington Wood, The Burning Heart (1967), pp.280-1.

(283) From his address supporting the Renovation Fund of Wesley's Chapel, June 20th, 1922.

(284) The Times, November 2nd, 1928. (From an address celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Wesley's Chapel.)

(285) Miscellanies (1901), p.34.

(286) England Under the Hanoverians (1911), p.386.

H. W. V. Temperley, after enumerating some of the greatest men of the eighteenth century, adds 'But more important than any of these in universality of influence and range of achievement, were John Wesley and the religious revival to which he gave his name and life.'(287)

From a social and economic standpoint, Wesley's influence has not passed unnoticed. G. M. Trevelyan wrote that the Methodist societies 'began a new chapter in the religious, social and educational history of the working class. The coincidence in time of Wesley and the Industrial Revolution had profound effects upon England for generations to come.'(288) Similarly, Dorothy George describes the Methodist revival as 'a spiritual revolution comparable with the revolution in industry....'(289) Socially and educationally, Wesleyan Methodism 'made a direct appeal to the poor'(290) and J. H. Plumb observes that 'for men and women who were just climbing out of utter poverty by the dint of their own thrifty endeavour.....ambitious men and women with a social conscience.... Wesley provided an organisation in which they could fulfil their need for power and their sense of duty.'(291) The socially stabilising effect of Methodism is reflected in the words of Christopher Hill, a modern historian not renowned for his religious sympathies. 'We need not argue that Methodism saved England from revolution to

(287) Cambridge Modern History, Vol. 6, p.77. See also J. Steven Watson, The Reign of George III (1760-1815), (1960), (Oxford History of England), p.38.

(288) English Social History (1944), p.362.

(289) England in Transition (1953 ed.), p.65.

(290) John Lawson and Harold Silver, A Social History of Education in England (1973), p.232.

(291) England in the Eighteenth Century (1965 ed.), p.95.

agree that its influence on the outcasts of society was in a profoundly non-revolutionary direction.'(292)

With much greater sympathy for Wesley's essential Christianity, J. Wesley Bready argued in the context of the well-known Halèvy thesis, that the Evangelical revival 'was the true nursing mother of the spirit and character values that have created and sustained free institutions throughout the English-speaking world.'(293) Bready argues that it was Wesley's 'evangelical conversion' which provided the energy for his 'crusade for righteousness'. Thus Wesleyan evangelicalism became a movement for 'personal and social regeneration'.(294) Bernard Semmel has further argued that Methodism was far from being a repressive force. It did not for that reason prevent an English counter-part to the French Revolution. Wesley's Christianity was itself a spiritual revolution with definite social implications of a liberal and progressive nature. Semmel insists that Wesleyan theology played a much more significant role than has hitherto been granted and, therefore, is deserving of the same kind of attention that Calvinistic theology has received in the context of seventeenth century Puritanism.(295)

Other writers have stressed Wesley's fundamental conservatism while observing the profound sense of spiritual liberty in those

(292) Reformation to Industrial Revolution (1969), p.276.

(293) England Before and After Wesley (1938), p.11.

(294) Ibid, p.196. See E. Halèvy, A History of the English People, Vol. 1 (Eng. tr.), (1924) and La Naissance du Methodisme en Angleterre (1906), translated as The Birth of Methodism by Bernard Semmel (1971).

(295) The Methodist Revolution (1974), p.5.

influenced by his evangelical theology. For all Wesley's ambivalence towards 'enthusiasm', and the practical thrust of his preaching, Martin Schmidt insists that 'For him, matters of doctrine were of prime importance: he was remorseless in refuting false teaching.' (296) Likewise Albert Outler says that 'For Wesley, evangelising and theologising were two functions of his single chief endeavour: the effectual communication of the gospel.' (297) In other words, while Wesley's standing as a theologian cannot be seriously questioned, he is to be seen, not as a theoretical theologian, but as an evangelising one. In the view of Skevington Wood, this is Wesley's chief significance in the history of the church. 'If the Damascus road explains Paul the Apostle; if the Milanese garden accounts for Augustine of Hippo, the doctor of the church; if the Black Tower of Wittenberg gave birth to Martin Luther as the pioneer Reformer; then Aldersgate Street, London, produced John Wesley the evangelist.' (298)

Like Richard Baxter, Wesley was a man of paradox. A devoted son of the Church of England, he fathered a breakaway church. An Oxford don, he became a preacher to the illiterate masses. An unbending Tory, he was a friend of the poor and an enemy of slavery. Saintly and calm in a crisis, he could be irritable and dictatorial. Stanley Ayling is surely right to suggest that many claims for Wesley's influence and importance have been extravagant. Dr. Philip

(296) John Wesley: A Theological Biography (1973), Vol. 2, part 2, pp.188-9.

(297) John Wesley (1964), p.vii.

(298) Op. cit., p.283.

Schaff's verdict of a century ago, that Wesley was 'the most Apostolic man since the Apostolic age'(299) is possibly an example of this. Indeed, George Whitefield is no less qualified in this respect. Even though Ayling has reservations about the Halèvy thesis, he is still prepared to regard Wesley as 'the single most influential Protestant leader of the English speaking world since the Reformation.'(300)

It is true that Wesley has become, in a sense, the property of all denominations. He has earned the respect, if not the affection, of all the churches. Dean Farrar, when Canon of Westminster, wrote generously of Wesley who had earlier been ostracised by the church he loved. 'I say that even now I do not think we have done sufficient honour to the work which Wesley did....' Reflecting on the numerous reforms of the nineteenth century, Farrar says 'that everything in the religious history of modern days was foreshadowed by John Wesley.'(301) Whilst regretting the excessive adulation Wesley had received at the expense of others, J. C. Ryle, when Vicar of Stradbroke in Suffolk, wrote 'Whether we like it or not, John Wesley was a mighty instrument in God's hand for good; and, next to George Whitefield, was the first and foremost evangelist of England a hundred years ago.'(302)

Even the Presbyterian historian A. H. Drysdale was anxious

(299) Given in John Telford, The Life of John Wesley (1929 rep.), p.378.

(300) John Wesley (1979), p.318.

(301) Given in Telford, Op. cit., p.377.

(302) Op. cit., p.105.

to point out Wesley's presbyterian ancestry and his adoption of quasi-presbyterian views of ordination and church government.(303)

Dr. R. W. Dale, the Victorian Congregationalist leader expressed the debt which the older nonconformity owed to Methodism. 'The great revival which originated Methodism restored life, vigour, courage, fervour to the Congregational churches of England.'(304)

C. H. Spurgeon, both Baptist and a Calvinist, was equally generous. Without hiding matters of serious disagreement, Spurgeon confessed 'As for John and Charles Wesley, they seemed to fly with all the speed of seraphs - they never had a moment's rest....As I have read their lives....I have felt as if I had not yet begun to live, and did not know how to begin. What have any of us done?'(305)

Elsewhere, Spurgeon declared 'The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self sacrifice, zeal, holiness and communion with God; he lived far above the level of common Christians, and was one of whom the world was not worthy.'(306)

Spurgeon's generosity bears the same stamp as George Whitefield's regard for the Wesleys. For both men, their Calvinistic convictions were not accompanied by personal disaffection for the Arminian evangelist. Despite their theological disagreements, Whitefield still desired John Wesley to preach his funeral sermon.(307) Things were otherwise with the high Calvinist Augustus Montague Toplady, whose

(303) History of the Presbyterians in England (1889), pp.584 and 589.

(304) Given in Telford, op. cit., p.377.

(305) A lecture entitled The Two Wesleys, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, December 6th, 1861, and reprinted in BOT (1969), issues 68, pp.15f. 69, pp.43f; 70-71, pp.54f. Quotation supra, issue 70-71, p.57.

(306) The Early Years (1962), p.173.

(307) See Wesley, Works, ed. Jackson (1841 ed.), Vol. 6, pp.158f.

treatment of Wesley was nothing short of vitriolic.(308) The eighteenth century Baptist Dr. John Gill was of a similar spirit where Wesley was concerned.(309) Much nineteenth century Calvinism tended to perpetuate such an attitude, which constrained Ryle, an Anglican Calvinist, to supply this charitable corrective. 'Then let us thank God for what John Wesley was, and not keep poring over his deficiencies, and only talking of what he was not.'(310)

In recent years, The Banner of Truth Trust, a neo-Calvinist publishing house, has endeavoured to exercise the same respectful charity towards John Wesley as witnessed in Whitefield, Spurgeon and Ryle. However, Arnold Dallimore's George Whitefield (311), published by the Trust, tends to project an image of Whitefield at the expense of Wesley. The author's concern to compensate for the undue neglect of Whitefield's contribution makes him unnecessarily critical of Wesley. Maldwyn L. Edwards has justly written, 'The danger is that the towering figure of John Wesley may cause his biographers by lack of perspective to underrate the importance of Whitefield, and likewise that those who write about Whitefield may consciously or unconsciously attempt to restore the balance and, like Shakespeare's lady, 'protest too much'.'(312) Iain Murray, the editor not only of the Trust's edition of Whitefield's Journal (313) but also of its monthly periodical, has been concerned to

(308) See DNB and Toplady, Works (1825), Vol. 5, pp.318f. See also J. C. Ryle, Toplady and His Ministry in Christian Leaders of the Last Century (1978 rep.), pp.358-384; Thomas Wright, The Life of Augustus Toplady (1911); P. E. G. Cook, Augustus Toplady, A Saintly Sinner (1978).

(309) See DNB and Gill, A Collection of Sermons and Tracts (1778), Vol. 3, pp.257f.

(310) Op. cit., p.105.

(311) Vol. 1 (1970); Vol. 2 (1980).

(312) George Whitefield after two hundred years, in WHS, Vol. XXXVII, Part 6, Oct. 1970, pp.178-9.



temper the traditional Calvinist antipathy towards John Wesley, without allowing any doctrinal concessions.(314)

The Wesley literature is immense. Space only permits a selective outline. After early biographies by Moore, Southey and others, the first major biography was by Luke Tyerman. Others of importance are by Telford (315), J. H. Overton (316), J. S. Simon (317), C. E. Vulliamy (318), V. H. H. Green (319), Martin Schmidt (320), A. Skevington Wood (321), Stanley Ayling (322) and Robert G. Tuttle (323). With special reference to the area covered by this thesis, Schmidt, Skevington Wood and Tuttle concentrate on Wesley's theology, as do George Cell (324), W. R. Cannon (325), Harald Lindstrom (326), Colin W. Williams (327), John Deschner (328), Robert C. Monk (329), Albert Outler (330), Bernard Semmel (331) and A.Coppedge (332). This thesis is not concerned with Wesley's sacramental theology. However, there are important studies in this field by J. E. Rattenbury (333), J. C. Bowmer (334) and J. R. Paris (335). The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society frequently provides studies related to John Wesley's life and work, chiefly of an historical nature.

(313) Op. cit., (1960).

(314) See An Open Letter on John Wesley and Whitefield and Wesley: Division and Unity in BOT (1979), issues 188 and 191-192 respectively.

(315) Op. cit., (1886).

(316) John Wesley (1891).

(317) John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism (1925) and John Wesley the Master Builder (1927)

(318) John Wesley (1931).

(319) The Young Mr. Wesley (1961) and John Wesley (1964).

(320) John Wesley: A Theological Biography (1964).

(321) The Burning Heart: John Wesley, Evangelist (1967).

## 2. His Life.

John Wesley was born in 1703. His father, Samuel Wesley, was the Rector of Epworth, Lincolnshire, a clergyman of the Tillotsonian type (336). Through both his parents, John Wesley inherited a distinguished puritan ancestry. His childhood was eventful. In 1709, he was dramatically rescued during a fire which destroyed the Rectory. In 1714, he became a scholar at Charterhouse, and in 1720, entered Christ Church College, Oxford. Wesley graduated B.A. in 1724, and was ordained deacon the following year. In 1726, he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College. He graduated M.A. in 1727 and was ordained priest a year later. In 1729, Wesley assumed the leadership of the 'Holy Club', a society commenced by his brother

- (322) John Wesley (1979).
- (323) John Wesley, His Life and Theology (1979).
- (324) The Rediscovery of John Wesley (1935).
- (325) The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification (1946).
- (326) Wesley and Sanctification (1946).
- (327) John Wesley's Theology Today (1960).
- (328) Wesley's Christology (1960).
- (329) John Wesley, His Puritan Heritage (1966).
- (330) John Wesley (A Library of Protestant Thought) (1964).
- (331) The Methodist Revolution (1974).
- (332) John Wesley and the Doctrine of Predestination (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1976).
- (333) The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley (1948).
- (334) The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism (1951).
- (335) John Wesley's Doctrine of the Sacraments (1963).
- (336) See Samuel Wesley's highly eulogistic Poem on the Death of His Grace John, late Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (1695).

Charles, a student at Christ Church. The nickname 'Methodist' was first given to the group at this time. In 1733, Wesley preached his university sermon The Circumcision of the Heart (337).

Soon after his father's death in 1735, Wesley met George Whitefield, then a student at Pembroke College. Around this time, Wesley published his own translation of Thomas a Kempis' The Imitation of Christ. Later the same year, he embarked on his mission to the new colony of Georgia at the invitation of the trustees. Wesley's stay in Georgia was accompanied by a sense of acute spiritual frustration. This contributed to his early return to England in 1738. Wesley's memorable 'evangelical conversion' occurred on May 24th, 1738, at a Society Meeting in Aldersgate Street, London. In June, he preached the sermon Salvation by Faith (338) at St. Mary's, Oxford. In August, he visited the Moravian settlement at Hernhuth in Germany. Wesley was, for a while, deeply influenced by Moravianism. On returning to England, he preached his first open-air sermon at Bristol in 1739, following the example set by George Whitefield. The first Extract of his Journal (covering the years 1735-39) was published, as was Hymns and Sacred Poems, in the same year. This period also saw the formation of the first Methodist Society, at the Foundery, near Moorfields.

In 1740, Wesley published his sermon Free Grace (339), which

(337) Works, Vol. 5, pp.190f.

(338) Ibid, pp.5f.

(339) Works, Vol. 7, pp.356f.

brought forth a reply from the Calvinist Whitefield.(340) In the following year, A Dialogue between a Predestinarian and His Friend (341) was published. In 1742, the quarterly visitation of the Methodist classes commenced, and two tracts were published, The Character of a Methodist and Principles of a Methodist.(342)

Methodism now became a nationwide phenomenon. Large outdoor congregations became commonplace. Wesley preached at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in May, 1742, and from his father's tomb at Epworth the following week, on being excluded from the church. A riot occurred at Wednesbury in October, 1743, as opposition to the Methodists mounted. Wesley preached his last sermon before the University in August, 1744, entitled Scriptural Christianity (343). This year also saw the publication of An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion(344). A Farther Appeal appeared the following year, as did the two Dialogues between an Antinomian and His Friend (345) and Wesley's important abridgement of Richard Baxter's Aphorismes(346).

The Dissenters were generally suspicious of the revival in its early stages. A notable exception was Philip Doddridge, who invited Wesley to lecture to his academy students at Northampton in 1745. Wesley also consulted Doddridge about a reading list for his preachers.(347) Doddridge was also reprimanded by the trustees of his Academy when some of his former students openly supported the Methodists in the West of England.

(340) See Appendix II in George Whitefield's Journals, ed. Murray (1960), pp.563f.

(341) Works, Vol. 10, pp.250f.

(342) Works, Vol. 8, pp.325f and 345f.

(343) Works, Vol. 5, pp.33f.

(344) Works, Vol. 8, pp.1f.

(345) Works, Vol. 10, pp.250f.

Sensational scenes were also witnessed during Wesley's visit to Cornwall in 1745. A riot broke out at Falmouth, but Methodism made great advances in the South-West. Later the same year, Wesley preached to the troops at Newcastle during the Jacobite rebellion. He visited Ireland in 1747. After his marriage to the widow Mrs. Vazeille in 1751, Wesley made his first visit to Scotland. In June of that year he resigned his Fellowship.

Wesley published the treatise Predestination Calmly Considered (348) in 1752 to counter the growing influence of Calvinism. Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament appeared in 1755, followed by another treatise The Doctrine of Original Sin (349) in 1756, the latter being a reply to the Unitarian Dr. John Taylor of Norwich. The small tract Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ (350) was penned in 1762 in reply to an antinomian critic, and Wesley's interest in science is seen in A Compendium of Natural Philosophy (351), published in 1763. The next year saw Wesley's abridgement of a Treatise on Justification by the Arminian Puritan John Goodwin (352), and, in 1765, A Short History of Methodism (353) was published.

(346) See Wesley's introduction, Works, Vol. 14, p.207.

(347) See G. F. Nuttall, Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge (1979), Letter 1166, p.236; also my Philip Doddridge and the Oxford Methodists, vide supra.

(348) Works, Vol. 10, pp.197f.

(349) Works, Vol. 9, pp.182f.

(350) Works, Vol. 10, pp.300f.

(351) See Wesley's introduction, Works, Vol. 13, p.454.

(352) Works, Vol. 10, pp.304f.

(353) Works, Vol. 8, pp.333f.

The second controversy with Calvinism erupted in August, 1770, and in the following month, George Whitefield died in America. Wesley preached Whitefield's funeral sermon at Tottenham Court Road Chapel in November (354). In 1772, the Calvinist Rowland Hill (1744-1833) attacked Wesley's Arminianism. This led Wesley to publish three replies, the first being Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's "Review of All the Doctrines taught by Mr. John Wesley" (355). The small tract Thoughts upon God's Sovereignty (356) appeared in 1777, as did another controversial piece A Plain Account of Christian Perfection (357).

Wesley showed little sympathy for the cause of American Independence. He expressed himself forcibly in A Calm Address to our American Colonies (358), Some Observations on Liberty (359) and A Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England (360). Toplady, who had opposed Wesley in the controversy over Calvinism in 1771, now accused him of dabbling in politics (361). Despite numerous charges to the contrary, none could doubt Wesley's strong Protestant convictions in Popery Calmly Considered, published in 1779 (362).

The advance of English Methodism was symbolised by the opening of the new City Road Chapel, London, in 1778, and its theology was expressed in the first issue of the Arminian Magazine published

(354) Works, Vol. 6, pp.158f.

(355) Works, Vol. 10, pp.360f. See DNB. Also V. J. Charlesworth, Rowland Hill, His Life, Anecdotes and Pulpit Sayings (1874).

(356) Ibid, pp.347f.

(357) Works, Vol. 11, pp.351f.

(358) Ibid, pp.76f.

(359) Ibid, pp.86f.

(360) Ibid, pp.123f.

(361) See An Old Fox Tarred and Feathered in Works (1825), Vol. 5, pp.441f.

earlier that year. The first American Methodist Chapel had been built in 1767, and Wesley ordained preachers for the American work in 1784. Wesley had hoped that his mantle might fall on John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley, in Shropshire, but Fletcher died in 1785. Wesley wrote and published A Short Account of the Life and Death of the Rev. John Fletcher (363) in 1786. The following year he met the Evangelical Anglican leader Charles Simeon of Cambridge. In 1788, Charles Wesley died at Bristol, aged eighty-one years. John Wesley's itinerant life had never made for a satisfactory marriage, and his wife, who died in 1781, was intensely jealous of her husband's numerous though innocent friendships with other godly women.

John Wesley preached his last open-air sermon at Winchelsea in October, 1790, and his penultimate sermon at City Road Chapel in February, 1791. The very next day, February 23rd, he preached finally at Leatherhead in Surrey. On the 24th, he wrote his last letter to William Wilberforce (364), encouraging him in the fight against slavery. Wesley had published a tract Thoughts upon Slavery as early as 1774 (365). After more than fifty years labour as an evangelist, author, organiser and leader of the Methodist movement, John Wesley died on March 2nd, 1791, aged eighty-eight years. He summed up the abiding conviction of his life in words uttered on his death bed, 'The best of all, God is with us.'

(362) Works, Vol. 10, pp.135f.

(363) Works, Vol. 11, pp.262f.

(364) See Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, ed. Telford (1931), Vol. 8, p.265.

(365) Works, Vol. 11, pp.56f.

### 3. His works.

John Wesley is not famous for his writings. He published no exhaustive biblical commentary like Owen's Hebrews, and no devotional classic such as Baxter's Saints' Rest. It cannot even be said that his sermons became models for later generations as Tillotson's did. However, while his Journal is his permanent literary memorial, Wesley's sermons and other writings still possess an abiding theological importance.

Although Wesley is renowned for his contribution as an evangelist, he also fulfilled the role of a pastor-theologian. In these capacities, he not only proclaimed the gospel, but insisted equally that those who believed it should be consistent witnesses to its power. He was not content merely to see sinners saved, but to see sinners become saints. As Wesley understood his mission to preach 'Scriptural holiness' in the prevailing religious conditions of his day, he saw Calvinism as the enemy to his evangelism, and Antinomianism as a threat to its lasting success.

The raison d'etre of Wesley's mission was his doctrine of universal redemption. He expressed this in his sermon Free Grace (1740). In his view, the doctrines of unconditional election and reprobation, and limited atonement, were a total negation of evangelistic enterprise. Wesley was soon embroiled in controversy



with George Whitefield whose doctrinal views had become decidedly Calvinistic. Whitefield had discouraged Wesley from publishing his sermon in the interests of unity, but not long after Whitefield's departure for America, Wesley published it. Whitefield then published his reply A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley in answer to His Sermon entitled Free Grace (366).

Whitefield not only contested Wesley's exposition of the text Romans 8:32 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all....', he also argued that Wesley's sermon was at variance with the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England, Of Predestination and Election. In Murray's words, Wesley's opinions 'were Arminian and not orthodox' (367). There can be no doubt that Wesley's position was out of harmony with the most moderately Calvinistic interpretation of Article XVII. In this respect, Whitefield's case was irrefutable. Even from an exegetical standpoint, Whitefield is arguably correct in viewing the 'all' of Romans 8:32 as meaning, in context, 'predestined believers', although this does not prove his basic position. He then proceeds to insist, as Dr. John Owen had done a century before, that the atonement was limited to the elect. 'Our Lord knew for whom he died.' (368)

Whitefield's arguments clearly had a profound, if temporary influence over Wesley. Shortly after the controversy over Free

(366) See Appendix II in Journals, ed. Murray (1960), pp.563f.

(367) Ibid, p.565.

(368) Ibid, p.587.

Grace, Wesley wrote a short memorandum entitled Calvinistic Controversy (369). In this extraordinary document, Wesley declares his sentiments in unambiguously Calvinistic terms. The immediate motivation behind the document was 'a strong desire to unite with Mr. Whitefield' and to avoid 'needless dispute'. However, there is a significant omission in Wesley's theological concessions. If he is prepared to admit unconditional election, irresistible grace and final perseverance - albeit with minor modifications, he does not allow Whitefield's doctrine of limited atonement. Even though Wesley was suspicious of leaning 'too much towards Calvinism' (370) in the 1744 Methodist Conference, he was willing in his doctrine of grace to 'come to the very edge of Calvinism' (371) at the 1745 Conference. However, it was arguably the question of the extent of the atonement which turned the scales in favour of Arminianism. Wesley's 'Calvinistic phase' was therefore temporary. In Predestination Calmly Considered (1752) (372), he gave permanent expression to those views for which he is famous.

With regard to the extent of the atonement, Whitefield's appeal to the Thirty Nine Articles is anomalous. As surely as Article XVII acknowledges personal predestination, Article XXXI states that the atonement was 'for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual'. In A Dialogue between a Predestinarian

(369) Works, Vol. 13, pp.478-9. Tyerman believes the document should be dated 1743 (Op. cit., Vol. 1, p.349).

(370) Works, Vol. 8, p.267. Thomas Jackson alludes to this statement in his comment on Wesley's sentiments in Calvinistic Controversy.

(371) Ibid, p.274.

(372) Works, Vol. 10, pp.197f.

and His Friend (1741), Wesley appeals not only to the articles, homilies and catechism of the Church of England, but also to the writings of the martyred Reformation bishops John Hooper and Hugh Latimer in support for his position. In short, Wesley appears to have support for his universalism within the official formularies of his church. If Whitefield is able to embarrass Wesley over predestination, Wesley is not without a case against Whitefield over the atonement (373). Wesley was to employ this very argument against Rowland Hill in 1772. This is a crucial aspect of the debate, and will require a careful evaluation in due course. The precise position of Reformation Anglicanism is also important in the light of recent studies of Calvin's theology of the atonement.

Very few scholarly studies of Wesley's theology investigate his views of the atonement. This must be largely owing to the fact that Wesley himself refused to speculate about its nature. There is a total absence in his writings of the kind of debate common during the seventeenth century. The issue of Anselm versus Grotius was never his concern. His practice was simply to announce the Biblical references to the fact of Christ's death, almost without interpretative gloss. Karl Heim is right to say that, for Wesley, Christianity rests on 'the majesty of what has happened'.(374) Colin W. Williams has shown the importance of the doctrine of

(373) See Irwin W. Reist, John Wesley and George Whitefield: A Study in the Integrity of Two Theologies of Grace, EQ, Jan. 1975, pp.26-40. It should be emphasised that, in Whitefield's case, his adherence to the doctrine of limited atonement did not inhibit his evangelistic activity. The same is also true of the Victorian Baptist preacher, C. H. Spurgeon. See Iain H. Murray, The Forgotten Spurgeon (1966). Both men were happily inconsistent in this respect.

(374) Jesus de Weltvollender (1952), p.77. Given in Skevington Wood, op. cit., p.237.

penal substitution for Wesley's theology (375), although Francis Frost has endeavoured to call this into question in relation to the hymns of the Wesleys (376).

Wesley's views on the subject of justification occasioned much controversy during his lifetime. It is very clear that the subject occupied his attention constantly, and never without considerable perplexity. What is significant is that Wesley's understanding of justification altered through the years, despite his occasional denials of this. Robert Tuttle attempts to divide Wesley's theological progress into three distinct periods: 'Salvation by Grace through Assurance (1738-1747); Salvation by Grace through Faith (1748-1762); and Salvation by Grace through Faith as Confirmed by Works (1763-1788).' (377) The chief factor in these changes arose from the challenge of antinomianism, both the Moravian and Calvinistic varieties. Bernard Semmel pursues a similar analysis. He points out the dominant influence of Luther in Wesley's thought during the years 1739-1741 (378). Indeed, Wesley's first published sermon Salvation by Faith (1738) reveals a thoroughly 'Lutheran' view of justification - 'Salvation by Grace through Faith alone'. The views of Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians that Christians never cease from being 'miserable sinners until death' alarmed Wesley, who believed that the saved sinner

(375) John Wesley's Theology Today (1960), p.85.

(376) Biblical Imagery and Religious Experience in the Hymns of the Wesleys in WHS, Vol. XLII, Part 6 (December 1980), p.161.

(377) Op. cit., p.331.

(378) Op. cit., p.35f.

must be progressively different from his pre-conversion state. Wesley then judged Luther's apparent antipathy towards good works to be the source of the antinomian libertinism he witnessed in the lives of many. By 1741, Wesley had come to regard Luther's Galatians as a 'dangerous treatise', confessing with shame that he had formerly esteemed the work so highly (379). Wesley therefore rejected solafidianism as commonly understood. During his early period, he also viewed assurance to be of the essence of faith in the manner of the Protestant Reformers. Wesley's correspondence with 'John Smith' (a nom de plume for Dr. Thomas Secker) (380) marked another significant alteration in Wesley's understanding at this period. He thereafter was careful to distinguish assurance from faith.

The dominant influence in Wesley's thinking after 1745 was Richard Baxter. Baxter's Aphorismes was chosen as 'study material' for the 1745 Conference (381), and Wesley published an abridged edition of it that year (382). The work went through four editions by 1797. These facts make Tuttle's analysis somewhat imprecise. Indeed, Baxter's theory of a two-fold justification - one by faith, i.e. initial justification, and the other by evangelical obedience, i.e. final justification, is evident in Wesley's 1746 sermon Justification by Faith (383). Wesley thereafter suffered the very

(379) See Semmel, op. cit., p.40 and Wesley's Journal (June 16th, 1741), Works, Vol. 1, pp.296-7.

(380) Works, Vol. 12, pp.53f.

(381) Works, Vol. 8, p.271.

(382) See Wesley's introduction in Works, Vol. 14, p.207. Wesley may have been acquainted with Baxter's work as early as 1744, in view of Wesley's statements about justification at the Conference in June of that year; however, as Monk suggests, (op. cit., p.128). It is impossible to be certain here.

kind of reproach Baxter had known, and for identical reasons. A further indication of Wesley's newly embraced solution to the antinomian problem is his attitude to the writings of Tillotson. The prevailing Anglican orthodoxy of Wesley's early period reflected the moralism of Latitudinarian theology, of which Tillotson was still viewed as the leading exponent. In an unpreached sermon, True Christianity Defended (1741), Wesley criticises Tillotson for asserting that 'not faith alone, but good works also, are necessary for justification'.<sup>(384)</sup> George Whitefield, who was severely criticised for attacking the dead Archbishop in 1740, cites Wesley as the source of the offending remark that the 'Archbishop knew no more of Christianity than Mahomet.'<sup>(385)</sup> However, Wesley published a selection of extracts from Tillotson's works in his 'Christian Library....of the choicest pieces of practical divinity which have ever been published in the English tongue.'<sup>(386)</sup> In the preface to the Tillotson volume, the Archbishop is described as 'this great man'. Wesley's change of opinion can only be explained by the close affinities between his and Tillotson's views of salvation (387). The plain fact is that Wesley's simplistic 'Lutheran' conception of justification underwent a fundamental

(383) Works, Vol. 5, pp.48f. Wesley refers to justification 'at the sentence of the great day' as well as the sinner's justification by faith, pp.52-3.

(384) Ibid, Vol. 7, p.433.

(385) See Tyerman, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.360, and Arnold Dallimore, George Whitefield, Vol. 1 (1970), pp.482-3 and Vol. 2 (1980), pp.46-47.

(386) A Christian Library.... Vol. XLV (1755). Extract from the Works of Archbishop Tillotson. Wesley abridges Tillotson's two sermons entitled 'Of the Ordinary Influence of the Holy Ghost on the Minds of Christians' (Till. II, pp.298-310), and also another on Titus 3:2, 'To Speak Evil of no Man' (Till. III, pp.491-504). Tillotson's conception of salvation - neither antinomian nor pelagian - permeates his exposition. See Wesley's preface to Works, Vol. 14, p.222.

change in the face of the antinomian challenge, enabling him to appreciate some of the emphases made by Baxter and Tillotson in a not dissimilar situation.

In the several published studies of Wesley's theology, inadequate attention is given to Wesley's change of view. Cannon, Williams, Schmidt, Outler and Skevington Wood seek to stress Wesley's dependence on Reformation theology, both continental and English. Wesley's theory of a two-fold justification is given little or no attention. Even Tuttle, who does argue a shift in Wesley's thought after 1763, refuses to admit that 'Wesley has changed his view of justification by faith.'(388) For obvious reasons, other scholars have noted 'anglo-catholic' overtones, not only in Wesley's sacramental theology, but also in his theology of justification. Maximin Piette (389) and Umphrey Lee (390) favour this view in the light of Wesley's stress on sanctification. It is true, as Outler points out, that for Wesley, sola fide, although a fundamental principle, came to mean that faith is the primary reality in Christian experience, but not its totality. Faith was primus, not solus. He also 'tried earnestly to maintain the parallelism between justification and sanctification - both by faith.'(391) However, Outler pleads too much for Wesley, to the neglect of Baxter's

(387) See John C. English, John Wesley and the Anglican Moderates of the Seventeenth Century, ATR, Vol. LI, July, 1969, No. 3, pp.203-220. With regard to the parallels between Wesley's ideas and those of the 'moderates', English suggests that 'Wesley was dependent upon the moderates for a portion of his ideas.'(p.206)

(388) Op. cit., p.336.

(389) John Wesley and the Evolution of Protestantism (1937).

(390) John Wesley and Modern Religion (1936).

(391) Op. cit., p.251.

influence, when he says that 'this insistent correlation between the genesis of faith and its fullness marks off Wesley's most original contribution to Protestant theology.'(392) By the same token, George Cell fails to distinguish Baxter's emphasis from the Roman Catholic doctrine of holiness when he argues that Wesley synthesised the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness (393).

Harald Lindstrom, John Deschner and Robert Monk take a more substantial look at Wesley's doctrine of final, as opposed to initial, justification, without really grasping the reasons for Wesley's modification of the sola fide principle. Deschner accuses Wesley of missing the significance of Christ's 'imputed active obedience', without being impressed with Wesley's reasons for rejecting such a concept of imputation. Monk correctly highlights Baxter's attraction for Wesley, although he mistakenly describes Baxter as an Arminian. He proceeds to argue that Wesley 'breaks justification in two' without perceiving why initial justification was an incomplete event. This is not to deny that Wesley had conceptual difficulties over the doctrine of justification. Indeed, it is arguable that he never really established a coherent view of the question. In this respect, he was not alone. Monk, whose particular interest is to reveal the influence of the Puritans on

(392) Op. cit., p.28.

(393) The Rediscovery of John Wesley (1935), p.361.



Wesley's thought, points out John Owen's remarkable concessions over the place of the believer's 'evangelical obedience' in his final justification, notwithstanding the Puritan's specific denial of the theory. This will be an important matter in the ensuing analysis.

What gives added interest to a study of Wesley's theology of justification is his frequent appeal to the theology of John Calvin. Outler is correct to point out Wesley's dependence on the Anglican Reformers during the 1740's, but he fails to notice Wesley's later references to Calvin. In the preface to his abridgement of the Arminian Puritan John Goodwin's Treatise on Justification (1764), Wesley says he employs the expression 'imputed righteousness' in the sense given it 'by Calvin in particular' (394). In his sermon, The Lord our Righteousness (1765), Wesley quotes from Calvin's Institutes three times on the subject (395). In May of the same year, Wesley also insisted that 'I think on Justification just as I have done any time these seven-and-twenty years (i.e. since 1738); and just as Mr. Calvin does. In this respect, I do not differ from him an hair's breadth.' (396) As late as 1770, the year the second Calvinistic controversy commenced, Wesley argued in his tract What is an Arminian? that Calvin never asserted justification by faith more strongly than the Methodists had done (397).

At the 1770 Conference, the fear of antinomianism led to the

(394) PJ, p.326.

(395) Works, Vol. 5, p.226.

(396) Journal (May 14th, 1765), Vol. 5, p.116.

(397) Works, Vol. 10, p.345.

view that good works, though not meritorious, were necessary for salvation as a condition nonetheless. To answer the violent opposition occasioned by the Minutes, the 1771 Conference issued the statement that 'the Doctrine of Justification by Works' was 'a most perilous doctrine' and that 'in life, death, or the day of judgement' the Christian's confidence was in 'the alone merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'. Works, though essential for salvation, had no meritorious value.(398) Likewise, in The Wedding Garment (1790), Wesley insisted that it is through 'Christ's merits alone that all believers are saved', whilst none are saved without 'personal holiness'.(399)

It will therefore be a matter of the greatest interest to see how Wesley can appeal to Calvin in his theology of justification, especially in view of the important changes of 1745. Wesley's Dialogues on antinomianism (1745) (400), his Farther Appeal (1745) (401), together with the two tracts Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ (1762) (402) and Thoughts on Salvation by Faith (1779) (403) reveal his constant preoccupation with these matters. The study of these and other writings will demonstrate a valid basis for comparison with John Owen's treatise Justification by Faith (1677), facilitating in addition an opportunity to assess the 'middle-way' contributions of Richard Baxter and John Tillotson.

(398) Journal, Vol. 5, p.427.

(399) Works, Vol. 7, p.300.

(400) Works, Vol. 10, pp.250f.

(401) Works, Vol. 8, pp.45f.

(402) Works, Vol. 10, pp.300f.

(403) Works, Vol. 11, pp.472f.

PART TWO: THE THEOLOGY OF THE GOSPEL

I

Atonement and Grace:

The character of the Gospel

1: The Arminian Reaction: its significance and implications.

....The Arminians, the modern blinded patrons of human self-sufficiency. (1642) (1)

....inclination to Popery, and enmity to the power of godliness, were at the bottom of the entertainment of the Arminian principles. (1654) (2)

Arminianism....the ruin and poison of the souls of men. (1682) (3)

JOHN OWEN

We have leaned too much toward Calvinism. (1744) (4)

Calvinism is not the gospel. (1778) (5)

Calvinism....It strikes at the root of salvation from sin. (1789) (6)

JOHN WESLEY

The theological outlooks of John Owen and John Wesley represent the two main currents of Protestant evangelical thought in British church history. An acquaintance with their writings reveals not only a deep commitment to their respective convictions, but a life-long antipathy to the opposite school of thought. The Calvinist-Arminian controversy has brought into conflict (albeit not personally) two eminent contestants in Owen and Wesley, both of

- (1) DA, p.11.
- (2) The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance, Works, Vol. 11, p.493.
- (3) The Duty of a Pastor, Works, Vol. 9, p.459.
- (4) Minutes of Some Late Conversations, Works, Vol. 8, p.267.
- (5) Letter to Mary Bishop, Works, Vol. 13, p.33.
- (6) Minutes of Several Conversations, Works, Vol. 8, p.323.

whom regarded themselves as advocates of Biblical Christianity. Despite a common Protestant heritage, their differing conceptions of the gospel were to prove a lasting cause of disunity. The Christian church has never displayed the unity its message demands; many schisms have been more or less predictable, when conservative and traditional ideas have been challenged by liberal and progressive ones. What has made the Calvinist-Arminian schism arguably more serious (7) is that both schools of thought claim the same conservative starting point. Both parties would identify with Luther's defiant confession at the Diet of Worms: 'My conscience is captive to the Word of God.' The Calvinist-Arminian controversy therefore raised important fundamental questions in connection with the methodology of theological interpretation. To an impartial observer, it might suggest an inversion of Luther's axiom: 'The Word of God is captive to men's consciences.' In other words, was theology in the post-Reformation era to be inevitably bedevilled by this fundamental source of discord? (8)

It is not commonly known that the Protestant Reformers were as equally concerned to preserve the unity of the Reformation movement as they were to justify their separation from Rome. Dr. Philip E. Hughes describes this concern as 'Reformed ecumenicity'.(9) Indeed, the famous Cranmer-Calvin correspondence (10) is sufficient

(7) Owen denies that the differences are 'of an inferior nature ....One church cannot wrap in her communion Austin and Pelagius, Calvin and Arminius'. DA, p.7.

(8) For an historical survey of the controversy, see Alan P. F. Sell, The Great Debate (1982).

(9) Theology of the English Reformers (1965), p.257.

(10) Cranmer wrote to Calvin: 'As nothing tends more injuriously to the separation of the churches than heresies and disputes respecting the doctrines of religion, so nothing tends more effectually to defend the fold of Christ, than the pure teaching of the Gospel and harmony of doctrine.' Miscellaneous Writings of Thomas Cranmer (Parker Society), (1846), pp.431-2.

evidence of a certain foreboding that separation from Rome might possibly prove to be but a stimulus to fragmentation ad infinitum within the Protestant world. History has demonstrated that the Reformers' fears were not without foundation. The Reformation churches soon developed national characteristics, as Lutheran, Anglican and Calvinist ideas came to dominate certain spheres of influence. Although differences of opinion were not fundamental as far as the Gospel of Grace was concerned, attitudes towards church order and worship revealed divergent ideas about the precise nature and extent of Scriptural authority. In England, this was particularly the case in the debates associated with the rise of Puritanism in the late 1560's.

Notwithstanding the serious problems created by these early differences in Protestant thought, none has proved as serious and far reaching in its ramifications as the Calvinist-Arminian controversy of the early seventeenth century. Developments in theology following the death of Calvin (1564) were met by a sense of unease on the part of some in Holland. After being appointed by the Reformed Church in Amsterdam to refute the dangerous views of the humanist theologian Dirk Volkerts Coornhert (1522-1590), Jacob Hermanszoon - known to history as Arminius (1560-1609) - soon contracted considerable sympathy with Coornhert's rejection of the doctrine of double predestination (11). In his earlier days,

(10) continued/ In response to Cranmer's suggestion of a synod of the Reformation Churches, Calvin replied, 'As far as I am concerned, if I can be of any service, I shall not shrink from crossing ten seas, if need be, for that object.' (As given in Hughes, op. cit., p.261.) Dr. Hughes comments, 'This grand project never came to fulfilment.' Ibid, p,262.

(11) A. W. Harrison, Arminianism (1937), p.16. See also Carl Bangs, Arminius, A Study in the Dutch Reformation (1971).

Arminius had been taught by Theodore Beza (1519-1605), Calvin's successor at Geneva. It was the acquaintance with Coornhert's views which suggested to Arminius that, whatever the intrinsic merits of Calvin's theology were, Calvinism had developed some unscriptural and unhealthy emphases in the hands of Beza.(12)

Eventually, Arminius rejected the doctrines of unconditional election, and predestination, asserting that election to salvation was conditional, and that the grace of God was resistible by human free will. Arminius was summoned before the States of Holland in October, 1608, to answer charges of heterodoxy which had been brought against him. In his Declaration, he was moderate and cautious on many points (13), although he attempted to argue that the doctrine of double predestination was internally inconsistent and at variance with the Biblical doctrine of God.

At the same time, certain individuals who were hostile to Arminius forged a document containing thirty-one articles, which were published under his name. Arminius published an Apology in 1609, the year of his death, in which he rejected the charges of 'novelty and heterodoxy, of error and heresy' in religion. Again, one is obliged to note the moderate tone of his approach. In answer to the charge that he had asserted that 'Christ has died for all men and for every individual' (Article 12), he replies that the

(12) Arminius had also become acquainted with a restatement of Beza's views in William Perkins' De Praedestinationis Modo Ordine in 1598. See I. Breward, The Life and Theology of William Perkins, 1558-1602, Ph.D. Manchester, (1963).

(13) Episcopius (1583-1643) and later, Limborch (1633-1712), went beyond their master, but on the subject of the perseverance of the saints, Arminius says, 'Though I here openly and ingeniously affirm, I never taught that a true believer can either totally or finally fall away and perish; yet I will not conceal, that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect;....' Declaration of the Sentiments of Arminius, in Works, tr. James Nichols (1825), Vol. 1, p.603.

statement 'possesses much ambiguity':

Thus it may mean either that 'the price of the death of Christ was given for all and for every one', or that 'the redemption, which was obtained by the means of that price, is applied and communicated to all men and everyone'.

(1) Of this latter sentiment I entirely disapprove, because God has by a peremptory decree resolved, that believers alone should be made partakers of this redemption.

(2) Let those who reject the former of these opinions consider how they can answer the following Scriptures, which declare, that Christ died for all men; that He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2), that He took away the sin of the world (John 1:29), that he gave His flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51), that Christ died even for that man who might be destroyed with the meat of another person (Romans 14:15), and that false teachers make merchandise even of those who deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction (II Peter 2: 1-3). He therefore who speaks thus, speaks with the Scriptures; while he who rejects such phraseology, is a daring man, one who sits in 'judgement on the Scriptures and is not an interpreter of them'. (14)

This extended quotation is important, together with the earlier note on perseverance, for one reason. The two statements, taken together, suggest that for purely biblical reasons, there was a degree of dissatisfaction with the prevailing Calvinistic orthodoxy. Arminius actually states that some interpretations of relevant texts did not satisfy him from a strictly exegetical standpoint.(15) Arminius was giving expression to the view that Reformation theology, in the hands of Theodore Beza and others, had, in several respects, exceeded the bounds of the Protestant rule of faith. Recent scholarship has brought this matter to light, with particular reference to the extent of the atonement. According to Brian G. Armstrong, R. T. Kendall and others, it was Beza, not Calvin, who insisted that Christ

(14) Op. cit., Vol. 2, pp-9,10.

(15) Op. cit., Vol. 1, p.603.



died only for the elect, a theological 'shift' which had important practical and pastoral implications. What Arminius was opposing was not so much the Calvinism of Calvin, but 'Bezan theology'. The theology of Calvin is essentially Christological. The doctrine of predestination is given a relatively low profile compared with Beza's supralapsarianism. In his Institutes, Calvin expounds predestination towards the end of Book III, where it is seen as an ex post facto explanation of why some are not saved. In Beza's theology, predestination is given much greater priority, even becoming its central motif. Beza was also responsible for the rise of federal theology, involving a notion of the imputation of Adam's sin quite foreign to Calvin. Federalism became enshrined in the Westminster Confession and high Calvinist Puritan theology generally (16). Kendall makes the interesting point that Arminius held Calvin's view of the atonement (17), although, as will be seen, this is an ambiguous oversimplification.

The movement initiated by Arminius came to a head in the year after his death. The Remonstrance of 1610 was a statement and summary of the master's basic position, the Five articles asserting that (I) God has decreed the salvation of all who believe on Him, (II) Although Christ died for all, yet only believers enjoy the benefits of His death, (III) Man needs the Holy Spirit's regeneration,

(16) See Brian G. Armstrong, Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy (1969), p.36; Holmes Rolston III, John Calvin versus the Westminster Confession (1972); R. T. Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism (1979), p.146; Bangs, op. cit., p.66; Sell, op. cit., p.3. See also Norman F. Douty, The Death of Christ (1972), and B. Hall, Calvin against the Calvinists, op.cit, p.19. For Beza, see his Tractationes Theologiae (1570-1582), Vol.I, pp.170f; pp.344, 362, 418; Vol.III, p.404. For a defense of Beza, see I. McPhee, Conserver or Transformer of Calvin's Theology? A Study of the Origins and Development of Theodore Beza's Thought (1550-1570). Cambridge Ph.D thesis, 1979.

(17) Kendall, p.150.

(IV) The grace of God is resistible and (V) Perseverance, though a gift of the Spirit, does not rule out the possibility of final apostasy (18). In response to the Remonstrants, the Reformed Churches convened the Synod of Dordrecht in May, 1619, in which the Five articles were condemned. The synod issued, by way of reply, five canons, in which Calvinistic orthodoxy insisted that (I) Election to salvation is unconditional, and not based on foreseen faith, (II) Christ's death was designed exclusively for the elect, (III) That man is totally unable to seek God without the Holy Spirit's regenerating work, (IV) That the grace of regeneration is efficacious, and (V) The elect, thus regenerated, will infallibly persevere to the end of their lives (19)

The question which concerns us in this present study is thus straightforward. Duly considering the mutually conflicting sentiments about Arminianism and Calvinism stated by John Owen and John Wesley at the beginning of this chapter, what is it about the nature of theological speculation that can create such polarization amongst minds equally committed to upholding the same rule of faith? That John Owen was pre-eminently a Biblical theologian is an obvious truism. 'For him,' says Toon, 'Holy Scripture, God's written Word was the sole authority for Christian faith, hope and conduct.' (20) Yet John Wesley claimed for himself all that Toon would say of Owen:

(18) See James Nichols Calvinism and Arminianism (1824), pp.90-164.

(19) The 'Five points of Calvinism' have been expressed in the popular mnemonic 'TULIP' where T = Total depravity; U = Unconditional election; L = Limited atonement; I = Irresistible grace; and P = Perseverance of the saints. It should be noted that the third and fourth Canons do not use the term 'irresistible'. Grace is said to be 'efficacious', a term which does not possess the deterministic connotations of 'irresistible'. See Owen, Works, Vol. 10, p.134. See also Peter Y. de Yong (ed.) Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in the commencement of the great Synod of Dort, 1618-1619 (1968), for full texts of the articles of the Remonstrants and the Canons of Dort.

I want to know one thing, - the way to heaven.... God himself has condescended to teach the way....He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri. (21)

However diverse were their conclusions, there can be no doubt that reverence for, and submission to, Holy Scripture were shared by both men. Indeed, they both agreed with Luther's axiom that the Bible was the sine qua non of a truly Christian theology, and that it was so exclusively.

Having stated that the Calvinist-Arminian controversy has had a deeper and more lasting influence on Anglo-Saxon Protestant thought than any other single controversy, one may also assert that the question of the extent of the atonement has been the focal point of the controversy.(22)

This was evidently how Owen himself viewed the issues in dispute. After publishing a general critique of the Remonstrants' position in his first work, A Display of Arminianism (1643), he devoted his attention to the doctrine of the nature and extent of the atonement in Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu; or the Death of Death, published in 1647. The only other work Owen published with direct reference to the 'Five points' was The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance (1654), although his basic theology pervades all his works, polemical, exegetical and devotional.

(20) God's Statesman, p.165.

(21) Works, Vol. 5, p.2.

(22) In his introductory essay to John Owen's Death of Death, republished separately in 1959, J. I. Packer says: It cannot be overemphasised that we have not seen the full meaning of the cross till we have seen it as the divines of Dort display it - as the centre of the gospel, flanked on the one hand by total inability and unconditional election, and on the other by irresistible grace and final preservation. (p.15). For an extended history of the controversy, see Curt Daniel, John Gill and Hypercalvinism, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh (1983), pp.496f.

It is equally evident that John Wesley viewed the extent of the atonement as the pivotal issue of the controversy with Calvinism. His sermon entitled Free Grace, published in 1740 (and based on Romans 8:32), launches the reader into the subject in the very first paragraph:

How freely does God love the world! While we were yet sinners, 'Christ died for the ungodly'. While we were 'dead in sin', God 'spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all'. And how freely with him does he 'give us all things!' Verily, FREE GRACE is all in all. (23)

As with Owen, Wesley also had much to say on the other points at issue, yet the entire controversy hinged on the question of the atonement and its extent. It is not difficult, at this stage, to suggest why this was the case. Bearing in mind Arminius' observation that there are numerous statements in the New Testament which employ 'universalist' terms in connection with the atonement, this cannot be said with regard to any of the other disputed points. There are no texts which specifically state that 'all are elected', or 'all are regenerated', or that 'all men believe', etc. There are however, despite any exegetical considerations, many statements which give the death of Christ a universal dimension, i.e. the very texts cited by Arminius. It is for this reason that the Calvinists of Owen's generation felt especially vulnerable. Their conception of the gospel seemed threatened. For the same reason, Arminianism will always be able to support its basic contention, by a direct

(23) Sermon 128, Works, Vol. 7, p.357.

appeal to the textual data in question. The concern of this thesis is to carefully analyse and evaluate the arguments and exegeses employed by Owen and Wesley, and at the same time, to examine to what extent factors of a non-theological and non-exegetical nature influenced their conclusions. In line with the basic methodology of this study, the 'middle-way' interpretation of the issues advanced by Richard Baxter in particular will be considered as a possible alternative to the respective accounts of Owen and Wesley.

As has been explained in Part 1, there are good reasons for making a comparison between Owen and Wesley. Between them, they represent the extremities of British evangelical thought, notwithstanding their shared aspirations. For all his scholastic accomplishment, Owen was not without a deep pastoral concern, and Wesley, though regarded as a peripatetic evangelist par excellence, was equally concerned with accurate biblical exegesis.

It might be suggested that the dissimilarities are too great to justify the kind of comparison being attempted. This objection has been answered, but more must be said in the present context. Owen has received high praise for his numerous literary achievements (24), and J. I. Packer's eulogistic statements about Owen's work on the atonement are daunting indeed. In his opinion, 'no

(24) See Toon, God's Statesman, p.173.

comparable exposition of the work of redemption....has been done since Owen published his. None was needed....His interpretation of the text is sure; his power of theological construction is superb; nothing that needs discussing is omitted, and (so far as the writer can discover) no arguments for or against his position have been used since his day which he has not himself noted and dealt with.'(25) If this was not sufficient to deter any scholar from making a critical review of Owen's work, Packer further insists that 'it may not be written off as a piece of special pleading for a traditional shibboleth, for nobody has a right to dismiss the doctrine of the limitedness of atonement as a monstrosity of Calvinistic logic until he has refuted Owen's proof that it is a part of the uniform biblical presentation of redemption, clearly taught in plain text after plain text. And nobody has done that yet.'(26) In short, Owen 'was sure in his own mind that a certain finality attached to what he had written....Time has justified his optimism'.(27)

What, therefore, is there in Wesley, to justify his own contribution being used as a foil for the gigantic achievement of Owen? It is true, in all his polemical tracts, Wesley never attempted anything on the scale produced by Owen. Even Predestination Calmly Considered (28) cannot be appealed to in this respect. However, when

(25) Op. cit., p.12.

(26) Ibid, p.13.

(27) Ibid, p.23.

(28) Works, Vol. 10, pp.197-249.

his enormous practical success in the great awakening of the eighteenth century is taken into account, his relatively 'ascholastic' yet meticulously considered opinions take on an importance sufficient to justify comparison with Owen. Bernard Semmel rightly rejects Leslie Stephen's thesis that Wesley, in opposing Calvinism 'was not able to distinguish the philosophic core of the doctrine from the perversions to which it is liable'.(29) In short, as Semmel argues, 'Methodist theology deserves the kind of attention which seventeenth century Calvinism has received.'(30) However deficient Wesley's theological writings may appear when compared with Owen's, he did produce a significant work of the kind Owen never attempted, i.e. his Notes on the New Testament(1754). Since, as far as the present thesis is concerned, considerations of an exegetical rather than a speculative or even deductive nature will be regarded as of final importance, Wesley's Notes, together with his other works, will be an adequate foil to Owen's textual comments, even if these writings are not to be compared in thoroughness of treatment with, for example, Owen's magnum opus, The Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It is strange to note that whereas Owen has been regarded as one of the leaders of British Calvinistic thought - he shares this honour with his famous contemporary, Thomas Goodwin, and a few others - Wesley is still appealed to as the exponent of British Arminian

(29) Op. cit., p.4.

(30) Ibid, p.5.

evangelicalism. There is really no other name which springs to mind as occupying such a place, unless one considers the Arminian John Goodwin (1593-1665) of the seventeenth century or the much neglected Richard Watson (1781-1833) (31) of the nineteenth century, whose erudite and substantial Theological Institutes (1823) provides the most thorough and systematic expression of Arminian evangelical thought. (This work will be consulted in due course.) In short, the world has heard of Wesleyans, but not Owenists.

What is of particular interest at the present juncture is that whether one considers Owen the advocate for, or Wesley the antagonist of, Calvinism, neither man seemed aware of the precise views of John Calvin on the extent of the atonement. Of the total of twenty eight references to John Calvin in Owen's works, seventeen are incidental references to the man, five are to his commentaries, with only six to the Institutes. The only reference to the Institutes in the Death of Death is not remotely connected with the extent of the atonement (32). It is very difficult to imagine that Owen was entirely unaware of Calvin's position, or that he merely assumed that the reformer's position coincided with his own. What lends weight to the idea of Owen's possible ignorance of Calvin's doctrine is that had he known it, he would no doubt have regarded

(31) The editor of Owen's Works, William H. Goold, describes Goodwin as the 'Wycliffe of Methodism, anticipating the views of its founder, Wesley, and redeeming them from the charge of novelty.' Prefatory Note, Op. cit., Vol. 11, p.2. For Watson, see Semmel, op. cit., pp.172f. The Methodist theologian W. B. Pope (1822-1903) also made a significant contribution to Arminian theology. See DNB Supp., and Sell, op. cit., pp. 95, 133.

(32) DD, p. 275.



him as an adversary of some note, and criticised him accordingly. On the subject of faith and assurance, Owen was not slow to suggest that the first generation of reformers were in error in not drawing a clear distinction between them. (33)

On the other hand, John Wesley quotes from Calvin's Institutes no fewer than twenty one times. Seventeen of these are found in A Dialogue between a Predestinarian and His Friend (34), with the purpose of refuting Calvin's necessitarianism, with another in Predestination Calmly Considered (35). The other three are citations to support Wesley's theory of imputation in his sermon, The Lord our Righteousness (36). One would imagine that had Wesley been aware of Calvin's views on the atonement, he would have both charged Whitefield and Toplady with going beyond their master's teaching, and would have at least suggested an inconsistency between such a view and absolute predestination in the case of Calvin himself. It would seem then, with regard to both Owen and Wesley, that their conceptions of Calvinism were not grounded in a first hand knowledge of the reformer's views, at least with regard to the extent of the atonement.

What then of the Calvinism of John Calvin? Dr. Kendall has asserted nothing that was not known to earlier generations of theologians with regard to Calvin's 'universalism'. William Cunningham was aware that the theology of Saumur, known to the world as

(33) Works, Vol. 5, p.84. Packer's enthusiastic support for Owen perpetuates the assumed coincidence between Calvin's theology and later Calvinism. See Arminianisms, in The Manifold Grace of God, Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference (1968), pp.22f.

(34) Wesley, Works, Vol. 10, p.250f.

(35) Ibid, p.199.

(36) Works, Vol. 5, p.226.

Amyraldianism (37) (after its most vocal exponent Moise Amyraut (1596-1664) had appealed to Calvin's writings in support of the theory of 'hypothetic universalism' - a via media between Bezan theology and the new Arminianism. However, Cunningham denies that there is sufficient evidence to justify such an appeal, although he candidly admits that 'we do not find in Calvin's writings explicit statements as to any limitation in the object of the atonement, or in the number of those for whom Christ died' (38).

Richard Baxter was largely responsible for introducing a modified version of Amyraldianism into this country, although he had reached similar views before learning of Amyraut. In the second book of his Catholick Theologie (1675) (39), Baxter cites Calvin's comments on a number of relevant texts to show that the reformer taught an unambiguous doctrine of universal redemption. Baxter also refers to a number of continental and British divines who subscribed to the same view, including Archbishop Ussher (1581-1656), Bishop Davenant (1570-1641), Dr. Samuel Ward (d.1643), John Preston (1587-1628), and William Twisse (d.1646), the prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly. Baxter gave his name to a free church tradition of 'moderate Calvinists', the most notable eighteenth century 'Baxterians' being Isaac Watts (1674-1748) (40) and Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) (41). Edward Williams (1750-1813) (42) and

(37) See Roger Nicole, article on Amyraldianism, in Encyclopaedia of Christianity (1964), Vol. 1, pp.184-193.

(38) Cunningham, The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation (1862), p.396.

(39) CT, p.50f.

(40) Watts expounded the position in his 'Ruin and Recovery of Mankind' (1740). See DNB and A. P. Davis, Isaac Watts (1943) p.107f.

to a degree, Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) (43) perpetuated Baxter's outlook. The New England divines, Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790) and Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) (44) were in the same tradition and, in the nineteenth century, Ralph Wardlaw (1779-1853) in Scotland (45), and Albert Barnes (1798-1870) and A. H. Strong (1837-1921) (46) in America were notable subscribers to 'moderate Calvinism'. In nineteenth century Wales, the Calvinistic Methodists 'moderated' the teaching of their Confession of Faith on the doctrine of the atonement(47). The General Assembly held at Carmarthen in 1874 resolved 'That while we do not wish to make any alteration in what is stated in this article, we think it necessary to call attention to the opposite truth concerning the infinite sufficiency of the atonement, as it is set forth in the hymns of Williams, of Pantycelyn, and in the writings of Charles of Bala, and Jones of Denbigh.' (48)

- (41) See DNB and M. Deacon, Philip Doddridge of Northampton (1702-1751) (1980); also G. F. Nuttall, Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge - a study in a tradition (1951). In his Lectures on Pneumatology, Ethics and Divinity (1764), see Works (1802-5), Vol. 5, p.214, Doddridge refers to Calvin's views on the extent of the atonement.
- (42) See DNB; also Sell, op. cit., pp.89f; R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., pp.168-171; and G. Thomas, Edward Williams and the Rise of Modern Calvinism, BOT, Jan/March, 1971.
- (43) See DNB; also A. H. Kirkby, Andrew Fuller - Evangelical Calvinist, BQ, XV (1954); Michael R. Watts, The Dissenters (1978), pp.458-460; G. F. Nuttall, Northamptonshire and the Modern Question, JTS, new series, xvi (1965), p.119.
- (44) See Bellamy's True Religion Delineated (1750), Discourse II, Section V. For Bellamy and Hopkins, See DAB and Encyclopaedia of Christianity, ed. Palmer (1964).
- (45) See DNB and Wardlaw's Discourses on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement (1854), and Systematic Theology (1856), Vol. 2, p.358f.
- (46) See Barnes, The Atonement (1860); Strong, Systematic Theology (1890); also Encyclopaedia of Christianity, ed. Palmer, and DAB.

With regard to Dr. Kendall, one suspects that he is not only unaware of the 'Baxterian' tradition, but also that he has not given an accurate portrayal of Calvin's views. There is substance to Professor Gordon Rupp's criticism that Kendall gives a 'simplistic statement of Calvin's position' (49). Indeed, the fact that he asserts that Arminius had 'stolen from Reformed theology Calvin's conviction that Christ died for all men' (50) and that Amyraut 'apparently thought he was but following Calvin' (51) suggests a failure on Kendall's part to carefully distinguish between Arminianism and Amyraldianism. It is not sufficiently realised that this distinction is as necessary to be made, as the one between the Amyraldian and Bezan positions.

Further evidence for Rupp's criticism arises in connection with Kendall's comparison of Calvin with Luther. We are told that Calvin's view 'breaks with Luther's', since 'Luther holds that 'Christ did not die for absolutely all', but for 'many', meaning the elect' (52). However, one can find other statements in Luther, very similar to Calvin's 'universalist' statements; 'Christ hath

(47) Trefnwyd i'w Berson ef gael ei osod yn lle y personau hyny (a hwy yn unig) a roddwyd iddo i'w prynu. Cyffes Ffydd, (1861), p.52. (It was ordained that (Christ's) Person should stand in the stead of those persons (and those only) who had been given him to redeem. Confession of Faith of the Calvinistic Methodists or the Presbyterians of Wales. (1900 English ed.,)p.74.)

(48) Ibid, pp.129-130. One might add R. S. Thomas (1844-1923), (Yr Iawn (1903)) who, later in the century, took a broader view. See also Sell, op. cit., pp.90-91.

(49) URC, Vol. 2, No. 6, October, 1980, p.197.

(50) Op. cit., p.150.

(51) Ibid, p.2.

(52) Ibid, p.13. See Luther, Lectures on Romans, (Library of Christian Classics) (1961), p.252.

taken away the sins, not of certain men only, but also of thee, yea and of the whole world' (53). Kendall fails to see the significance of Luther's qualification 'absolutely'. The two statements of Luther are quite compatible, as are similar statements in Calvin, on the grounds that a conditional atonement is made for all (54), but absolutely only for the elect.

That Calvin expounded the atonement in this 'dualistic' manner is clear from an abundance of evidence.(55) The provision of the atonement is universal since '...the salvation brought by Christ is common to the whole human race, inasmuch as Christ, the author of salvation, is descended from Adam, the common father of us all.' (56) However, unless we possess Christ by faith, 'nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us.'(57) These quotations from the Institutes are confirmed elsewhere.

It is incontestable that Christ came for the expiation of the sins of the whole world...Hence, we conclude that, though reconciliation is offered to all through Him, yet the benefit is peculiar to the elect. However, while I say it is offered to all, I do not mean that this embassy, by which on Paul's testimony (II Corinthians 5:18) God reconciles the world to Himself, reaches to all, but that it is not sealed indiscriminately on the hearts of all to whom it comes so as to be effectual. (58)

- (53) Commentary on Galatians (Middleton ed.), ed. P. S. Watson (1953), p.52.
- (54) Calvin actually says that when Scripture says that God is willing 'that all be saved', such forms of speech' are 'conditional', even though he is 'determined to convert none but his elect'. Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, p.105-6.
- (55) For an exhaustive study of the evidence, see Curt Daniel, op. cit., Appendix A, 'Did John Calvin teach Limited Atonement', Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh (1983), pp.777f.
- (56) Institutes, II:13:3. See also II:12:3.
- (57) Ibid, III:1:1. See also III:2:15.
- (58) Eternal Predestination, pp.148-9.

Calvin's Commentaries are no less emphatic:

Paul makes grace common to all men, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is offered to all. Although Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all men, yet not all receive Him. (59)

Calvin's 'dualistic' conception could not be more evident in his Commentary on Galatians:

....God commends to us the salvation of all men without exception, even as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world....It is not enough to regard Christ as having died for the salvation of the world; each man must claim the effect and possession of this grace for himself personally. (60)

Calvin obviously taught that the free offer of the gospel is based on a universal atonement, and that anyone who comes to Christ is to believe, antecedent to his believing, that Christ has died for him.

Although, then, Christ is in a general view the Redeemer of the world, yet his death and passion are of no advantage to any but such as receive that which St. Paul shows here. And so we see that when we once know the benefits brought to us by Christ, and which he daily offers us by his gospel, we must also be joined to him by faith. (61)

The particularism implied by election does not negate the universalism of the atonement in Calvin's view:

But yet, he says that all this (i.e. salvation) comes from God's pure mercy and eternal election, which is remote and unknown to us, but we have knowledge of it by the Gospel which is its means and its instrument. For what would be the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ offering himself in sacrifice to reconcile the world to God his Father, unless we are made partakers of it by faith? (62)

(59) Comment, Romans 5:18.

(60) Comment on Galatians 5:12 and 2:20. See his Comments on Matthew 20:28; Mark 14:24; Colossians 1:14 and Hebrews 9:27-28.

(61) Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians (1973 ed.), p.55.

(62) Ibid, p.71. See also pp.145, 247, 251, 252, 488 and 521.

It never even occurred to Calvin to question the idea of a universal atonement, notwithstanding its ultimate, limited application to believers. His comments on the sixth session of the Council of Trent are sufficient proof of this. Article 3 states concerning Christ, 'Him God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.' Article 4 then declares, 'But though he died for all, all do not receive the benefit of his death, but those only to whom the merit of his passion is communicated.' There is nothing in these statements which Calvin objected to. 'The third and fourth heads I do not touch.'(63)

Calvin's last will (April 25th, 1564) contains a conclusive piece of evidence, perfectly consistent with all that has gone before:

I further testify and declare that as a suppliant I humbly implore of him to grant me to be so washed and purified by the blood of that great sovereign Redeemer, shed for the sins of the human race, that I may be permitted to stand before his tribunal in the image of the Redeemer himself. (64)

It is important to point out that, as a corollary to his 'dualistic' position on the atonement - 'applicable to all; applied to the elect' - Calvin taught a distinction between common and special grace (65). Cunningham is totally wrong to deny that Calvin taught a doctrine of common grace (66). Calvin's teaching at this

(63) Tracts containing Antidote to the Council of Trent (Calvin Translation Society ed., 1851), pp.93 and 109.

(64) This is quoted in several places. Tracts and Treatises, Vol. 1, pp.cxiii-cxxvii; Douty, op. cit., p.117. See also Letters of John Calvin (selected from the Bonnet Edition, 1980), p.29. (The version given at p.29 is at variance with that given at p.250.

(65) Compare the Comment on Romans 5:18 and Sermons on Ephesians, p.57 (common grace) with ibid, p.146 and Sermons on the Saving Work of Christ, ed. Leroy Nixon (1980 rep.), p.100 (special grace). See Herman Bavinck, Calvin and Common Grace in Calvin and the Reformation (1909).

point formed the basis of his belief in the free offer of the Gospel, a truth later denied by the 'hypercalvinists' of the eighteenth century who, agreeing with the 'high Calvinism' of Beza, considered it inconsistent to teach the 'free offer' along with the doctrine of limited atonement. The importance of these observations will appear in the ensuing analysis.

In view of the evidence, of which the above is but a significant selection, it is remarkable that anyone should question whether Calvin believed in universal atonement. Yet William Cunningham could write 'We believe that no sufficient evidence has been brought forward that Calvin held that Christ died for all men, or for the whole world....' (67) Cunningham appeals to one, isolated utterance of Calvin's, which appears to teach a strict limitation of the atonement. The statement in question is found in Calvin's refutation of the Lutheran writer Heshusius concerning the true partaking of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In view of the extract's importance it will be quoted in full:

But the first thing to be explained is, how Christ is present with unbelievers, as being the spiritual food of souls, and, in short, the life and salvation of the world. And as he adheres so doggedly to the words, I should like to know how the wicked can eat the flesh which was not crucified for them? and how they can drink the blood which was not shed to expiate their sins? I agree with him, that Christ is present as a strict judge when his supper is profaned. But it is one thing to be eaten, and another to be a judge....Christ,

(66) Op. cit., pp.396-7.

(67) Ibid, p.398.



considered as the living bread and the victim immolated on the cross, cannot enter any human body which is devoid of his spirit. (68)

Neither Kendall nor Douty consider this obviously important statement. The question is, how is Calvin to be understood, especially in the light of the other evidence? Several possibilities emerge. Firstly, Calvin could be simply contradicting himself (69). Since the tract appeared in 1561, it might be argued that the earlier 'universalist' statements no longer expressed his mature thoughts on the subject. (If this were so, then the statement in his will presents difficulties.) Secondly, it might be argued that all Calvin's other utterances on the atonement were somewhat vague and indefinite, and that the Heshusius extract explicitly reveals Calvin's mind on the subject. This view is subscribed to by Cunningham and A. A. Hodge (70). (From the nature of the evidence already quoted, it is difficult to imagine that Calvin was being imprecise so frequently. This option amounts to viewing the exception as the rule, hardly a scientific use of documentary evidence. Thirdly, it might be argued that Calvin's statement is open to another interpretation, and that he is not really discussing the extent of the atonement at all.

Daniel argues for a version of the third option (71). He suggests that Calvin's reply takes notice of Heshusius' belief in

(68) Tracts and Treatises (C.T.S. ed.), Vol. 2, p.527.

(69) Contradictions in Calvin are not unknown. For example, he seems to deny that 'grace is offered equally and promiscuously to all in the Institutes (II:2:6) (although he might mean special grace), a statement obviously contradicted by his comment on Romans 5:18 and other similar statements.

(70) The Atonement, pp.359-360. Hodge is not always consistent with his particularism. 'Christ....in his priestly work, has made the salvation of all men possible on the condition of their accepting it,....' Evangelical Theology, (1976 ed.), p.219.

(71) Op. cit., p.818.

consubstantiation, i.e. 'This is my body....' and 'This is my blood....' are taken literally. Calvin, of course, denies this theory, urging that Christ is only present spiritually and received spiritually by true believers. Daniel also argues that Calvin employs a rhetorical device - paralleled elsewhere in Calvin's writings (72)-viz 'I should like to know....' in which he expresses, not his own views, but those of Heshusius himself. Daniel's argument at this point is somewhat incoherent. After all, this would imply that Heshusius is denying that Christ died for the wicked. Although Daniel acknowledges that Lutherans taught universal atonement, his interpretation clearly contradicts this. He then suggests a paraphrase of Calvin, which focusses attention on faith rather than consubstantiation. 'I should like to know how the wicked can eat the flesh of Christ if they do not believe that Christ was crucified for them.'(73) This is clearly an alteration of Calvin's language, not just a paraphrase. The fact remains, whoever's sentiment is being expressed, there is a categorical denial that Christ was crucified for the wicked. This would appear to involve Calvin in a contradiction.

There is one more possible interpretation of Calvin's refutation of Heshusius, which does justice to every element in the statement, without involving Calvin in self-contradiction. Calvin

(72) Institutes, IV:17:33, Tracts and Treatises, Vol. 2, pp.378,415.

(73) Op. cit., p.822.

is highlighting the error of consubstantiation when he says '....as he adheres so doggedly to the words (i.e. Matthew 26:26, etc.) An alternative paraphrase becomes: 'If our Lord's words are to be taken literally, I would like to know how the actual bread and the actual wine about which he spoke were crucified? How can the wicked (or anyone else for that matter) eat that 'flesh' and drink that 'blood' since the elements themselves were not crucified for their sins. Christ himself was crucified for them, not the symbolic elements. Furthermore, we only partake of Christ spiritually when we partake of him by faith through the Spirit.' This solution makes coherent sense of an otherwise problematic passage, making it consistent with Calvin's other utterances.

Paul Helm attempts to defend the traditional interpretation of Calvin in his reply to Kendall (74). Like Cunningham, Helm denies that there is any evidence to warrant a modified view of Calvin's position. One suspects that Helm is unaware of the evidence already cited, when one reads 'But Calvin is not saying ....that Christ expiated the sin of the whole world.'(75) This is directly opposed to Calvin's explicit language: 'By the sacrifice of His death all the sins of the world have been expiated.'(76) Helm is arguably as uneasy as Cunningham when he declares 'There are passages in Calvin which show that he held to the doctrine of

(74) Calvin and the Calvinists (1982). See also Calvin, English Calvinism and the logic of Doctrinal Development, in SJT, Spring, 1981, pp.179-185. In Calvin and Calvinism, Evangel, January, 1984, pp.7-10, Helm suggests that since Karl Barth attributed the 'theological error' of limited atonement to Calvin, therefore the traditional view of Calvin is correct. However, this doubtful argument might also suggest that both critic and apologist are wrong in their assessment of Calvin.

(75) Op. cit., p.46.

(76) Comment, Colossians 1:14.

limited atonement....' although Calvin 'does not commit himself to definite atonement'.(77) The question obviously arises, 'How can Calvin hold to a doctrine that he does not commit himself to? Most of Helm's arguments about Calvin's alleged particularism are merely deductive or inferential, i.e. Calvin taught election, therefore he must have believed in an atonement limited to the elect. He also appeals to the Heshusius passage, to the neglect of the far more numerous universalist passages. In short, his defence of the 'traditional Calvin' is totally unconvincing.

It would appear that Daniel is fully justified in concluding that 'Calvin did not believe in limited atonement'.(78) If the doctrine of limited atonement enters into the definition of 'Calvinist' as the traditional view asserts, then Calvin himself was no Calvinist. Calvin's professed disciples are therefore 'ultra-' or 'high Calvinists', teaching a doctrine of the atonement which their 'master' would not recognise nor acknowledge as his own. Ralph Wardlaw charges them with 'out-calvinizing Calvin', thus giving the Arminians an excuse for rejecting true Calvinism.(79) For some, the discovery of Calvin's actual position might not alter their convictions about the atonement. They rightly argue that Scripture is the final arbiter, not Calvin. The ultimately important question then becomes, was Calvin scriptural at this point?

(77) Op. cit., p.18.

(78) Op. cit., p.827. R. W. A. Letham is incorrect to say that 'Calvin does not commit himself on the question of the extent of the atonement.' See Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformed Theology: Zwingli to the Synod of Dort, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Aberdeen (1979), Vol. 1, pp.125-126.

(79) Discourses on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement of Christ, p.lxxvii. See also Basil Hall, Calvin against the Calvinists in John Calvin, pp.19f.

This is a question which this thesis will attempt to answer. However, Calvin's position remains a matter of the greatest intrinsic interest in a debate of continuing importance. (80)

Paul Helm is therefore wrong in denying that Calvin teaches universal atonement, although he is correct to criticise Kendall for implying that Calvin believed in anything more than a conditional salvation for all. Kendall is definitely mistaken when he says that Calvin rejected the medieval scholastic distinction (used by Lombard and Aquinas) between the universal sufficiency of Christ's death, and its efficiency for the elect. He says that Calvin twice considers the 'common solution' but that he 'rejects it both times'. (81) We then read that Calvin 'could....allow for the truth of the formula', but that he did 'not accept' it. The simple fact is that Calvin did accept the formula. In commenting on the key verse, I John 2:2, Calvin is thoroughly explicit in what he asserts and what he denies:

Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world but effectively only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools. Although I allow the truth of this, I deny that it fits this passage. (82)

Kendall is equally mistaken in implying that the advocates of limited atonement alone employ the 'common solution' in their theory. (83) John Owen does not quarrel with the distinction, that is true, but he does insist that, although the infinite sufficiency of Christ's

(80) See Tony Lane, The Quest for the Historical Calvin, and M. Charles Bell, Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement in EQ, Vol. LV, No. 2 (April, 1983).

(81) Op. cit., p.16. For another instance, see Sermons on Isaiah, p.116

(82) Comment, I John 2:2. The other reference may be somewhat ambiguous. When Calvin says 'the common solution does not avail', he probably only means 'does not avail for his opponent, Georgius'. Eternal Predestination of God, p.148.

(83) Op. cit., p.16.

death is the basis of the universal offer of the gospel, it is not in the least relevant to the extent of the atonement, in any sense.

(84) In other words, Calvin and Owen attach very different conceptions to the distinction. For Owen, the term 'sufficiency' has a merely potential significance, whereas Calvin clearly views it in terms of an actual redemptive provision. This is the real difference between the theories of limited and unlimited atonement with regard to the distinction in question.

Another matter which will concern us in our eventual analysis of Owen's treatise on limited atonement, is the scriptural use of such universal terms as 'all' and 'world'. Kendall is right to say that, generally speaking, Calvin leaves these terms alone, without imposing any unnatural sense upon them. He is wrong to say that Calvin never does otherwise. Commenting on I Timothy 2:5-7, Calvin says 'The universal term 'all' must always be referred to classes of men but never to individuals.'(85) Unlike Owen, this is not Calvin's invariable exegesis (86), (although he believes Paul's words in I Timothy 2 demand it in this instance), and he never equates 'world' with 'classes of men' in the sense that individuals within each class are not meant. Calvin equates 'world' with the 'whole human race' (87), a view he shares with Luther (88).

(84) DD, p.296.

(85) Comment, I Timothy 2:5-7.

(86) Comment, John 1:29, 'Now it is for us to embrace the blessing offered to all, that each may make up his mind that there is nothing to hinder him from finding reconciliation in Christ, if only, led by faith, he comes to him.' (Note: 'each' cannot mean 'each class'.)

(87) Comment, John 1:29; 3:16; Mark 14:24; Matthew 20:28.

(88) Commenting on John 1:5, 10-13,16, Luther says, 'What do you think he means by 'world'?....The use of this term, 'world', is characteristic of this Apostle; and by it he simply means, the whole human race.' The Bondage of the Will, tr. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnson (1957), p.302.

Helm (89) and Philip H. Eveson (90) criticise Kendall's assertion that 'While Christ died for all', 'He does not pray for all'.(91) They both rightly point out that Calvin treats Christ's death and intercession as inseparable. However, this does not help Helm's case. Only two pages before the section cited by Kendall, Calvin affirms that Christ 'prayed for the wicked' (92) as well as for the elect. John Owen was to argue very cogently for a necessary connection between Christ's oblation and intercession, in a manner very different from Calvin. The latter clearly suggests that in his priestly office, Christ offers the benefits of salvation to all conditionally, i.e. the benefits of both his death and intercession, but that 'entrenched obstinacy' prevents the efficacious reception of such benefits.(93)

Kendall is correct to challenge Cunningham's belief that there was no significant difference between Calvin and later Calvinists over the extent of the atonement (94), but he fails to use the evidence with sufficient cogency. Helm admits there are differences, but they are to be accounted for in terms of 'a live developing theological tradition'. (95) The same point is made by Packer, who says that the Synod of Dort formula of limited atonement states what Calvin 'would have said had he faced the Arminian

(89) Op. cit., pp.36f.

(90) Review of Kendall in The Churchman's Magazine, January, 1981, p.47. Other reviews of Kendall are similarly critical.

(91) Op. cit., pp.13-14.

(92) Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy, tr. T. H. L. Parker (1956), p.143. See also Calvin's Comment, John 17:9.

(93) 'If then we remain in the world and are separated from our Lord Jesus Christ, it is certain that what He has prayed of God His Father does not belong to us and cannot profit us at all.' Ibid, p.145. (Emphasis mine; note: Calvin does not say that Christ has not prayed for such, only that what has been prayed for is not efficacious in any but the elect.)

thesis'. (96) The question is of course debateable. It must also be asked: Were the theological developments merely the result of logical deduction within the confines of the biblical data, or beyond it? Baxter believed that the differences were the result of 'over doing', and that John Owen was an 'over-orthodox Doctor' (97). The truth of such a charge must be investigated in some depth in due course.

Having surveyed the 'Calvinist' background antecedent to both Owen and Wesley, we may now begin to attain a fuller picture of the main issues involved. John Owen's theology of the atonement was different from Calvin's, although he seems to be ignorant of the fact. His views were more in line with the Beza-Dort school, what may be termed high-Calvinism. There is an interesting anomaly in Owen's personal theological outlook arising out of his early churchmanship. In the epistle dedicatory from the Display of Arminianism (1643), Owen speaks of Arminianism as 'a doctrine so opposite to that truth our church hath quietly enjoyed ever since the first Reformation' (98). Of course, 'our church' was the Church of England, and Owen was by now in holy orders, having been ordained deacon by John Bancroft, Bishop of Oxford, in 1635 (99). Although not to be compared with the Death of Death in thoroughness and

(94) Op. cit., p.213.

(95) Helm, op. cit., SJT, Spring, 1981, p.185.

(96) John Calvin (1966), p.151. In reply to Packer, does not the evidence overwhelmingly suggest what Calvin would have said to the Arminians? If he found the Tridentine statement acceptable, why would he object to an Arminian one?

(97) Nuttall, Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: a study in a tradition, p.10 and p.24, n.19.

(98) Works, Vol. 10, p.6.

(99) Toon, God's Statesman, p.6.



exegesis, the Display of Arminianism still contains a vigorous statement of the doctrine of limited atonement.(100) However, not only is Owen's doctrine different from that of Calvin, it is likewise different from the teaching of the Anglican Church in which he was ordained. It is ironical that the parliamentary committee to whose members Owen dedicated his work had been appointed to examine all innovations in doctrine and discipline illegally introduced into the church since the Reformation. It is certainly arguable that the doctrine of atonement Owen was at pains to defend was itself an innovation, (quite as much as Arminianism), for Owen was expounding the doctrine advanced in the English Church by William Perkins (1558-1602), who in turn had been influenced by Theodore Beza (101). In short, the XXXIX Articles, the Homilies and the Prayer Book do not justify Owen's theological standpoint. It is true, Article XVII, Of Predestination and Election - the longest of all - asserts the reformed conception of that subject, but on the question of the atonement, there is a total absence of the kind of logical inference which in the hands of Beza and Perkins led to the view that Christ only died for the elect. This anomaly, which will require a brief demonstration, is equally relevant to John Wesley, albeit from a very different angle.

(100) Dis. A., Chapter 9, p.87f.

(101) See Kendall, op. cit., p.51f.

In his Dialogue between a Predestinarian and His Friend, Wesley is anxious to convince the 'predestinarian' that 'Christ is the Saviour of all' (102). He insists that his view is the position of 'the Church of England, both in her Catechism, Articles and Homilies'. He also claims the support of 'our most holy martyrs, Bishop Hooper and Bishop Latimer in particular' (103). In the course of the dialogue, there is no reference whatever to Article XVII; the same Church's explicit teaching on predestination is conspicuous by its absence. The sense of paradox increases in reading Predestination Calmly Considered, since again - despite the subject - there is no reference to Article XVII. This is arguably very selective treatment, especially in view of the fact that in the introduction to this work, Wesley quotes from the various Reformed confessions on the subject of predestination (including the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession), with a view to refuting them; he evidently felt that his own church's teaching in no way threatened his own thesis. However, even allowing the article's 'moderation' on the issue of reprobation (104), it contains a sufficiently anti-Arminian emphasis.

Wesley clearly felt obliged to state his attitude to Article XVII in his reply to the attacks made on him by Rowland Hill (105).

(102) Works, Vol. 10, p.250.

(103) Ibid, p.255.

(104) The article does say that 'curious and carnal persons' have before them 'the sentence of God's Predestination' (emphasis mine), although there is no explicit statement about reprobation. See J. I. Packer, Thirty-Nine Articles (1961), p.32.

(105) Rowland Hill, Review of all the Doctrines taught by Mr. John Wesley (1772).

Hill had employed extraordinary language, viz, that 'to question election is to overthrow a great doctrine of the Gospel: therefore he, the election-doubter, must die'.(106) Hill, like Owen before him, clearly thought that Calvinism could never tolerate Arminianism. Wesley quotes Hill, with some added remarks of his own\*:

The only cement of Christian union is the love of God; and the foundation of that love must be laid in believing the truths of God; (that is, you must believe particular redemption, or it is impossible you should love God\*) for to use 'the words of Dr. Owen, in his Display of Arminianism', (see the truths which Mr. H. means\*), an agreement without truth is no peace, but a covenant with death, and a conspiracy against the kingdom of Christ. (107)

On the subject of election, Wesley insists that Article XVII 'does not assert absolute predestination' and he denies that he ever contradicted it. Wesley then adds what is surely a very significant statement:

I never preached against the Seventeenth Article, nor had the least thought of doing it. But did Mr. Hill never preach against the Thirty-first Article, which explicitly asserts universal redemption? (108)

Although Article XVII does not employ the terms 'absolute' or 'reprobation', Wesley cannot reasonably argue that it teaches conditional election, or election based on faith foreseen, without offering violence to the phraseology.(109) However, Wesley's reference to Article XXXI shows that the Reformed Anglican Church

(106) Op. cit., p.37.

(107) Wesley, Remarks on Mr. Hill's Review...., Works, Vol. 10, p.363.

(108) Ibid, p.368.

(109) Packer has no doubt that the article is unequivocally 'Calvinistic' (op. cit., p.32). Burnet is noncommittal in the interests of liberty of conscience (An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1699), ed. J. R. Page (1841), p.227, but E. J. Bicknell is sure the article is not 'Calvinism', A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1919), p.281.

did not commit its ministers to the High-Calvinism of Beza, Perkins and Owen. In the controversy with Wesley, Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) failed to see this point (110). His reference (111) to Andrew Willet's Synopsis Papismi (c.1600), in which the doctrine of limited atonement is asserted, only proves that the original Reformation position had changed through the influence of Beza and Perkins. Brian G. Felce is also mistaken for the same reason (112).

Wesley's appeal to Reformation Anglicanism in support of universal atonement has, at least superficially, much to justify it. One has, of course, to remember that the doctrine maintained by the Anglican Reformers was a position akin to Calvin's theory (sufficient for all/efficient for the elect), rather than that of Arminius (sufficient for all). For instance, John Bradford (1520-1555) declared that 'Christ's death is sufficient for all, but effectual for the elect only' (113). Article XXXI stresses the aspect of universal sufficiency, 'The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual;....' Articles II and XV imply a similar understanding. In the Book of Common Prayer, the prayer of Consecration from the service of Holy Communion is equally explicit, that Christ made 'a full, perfect, and sufficient

(110) See Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England, Works (1825), Vol. 1. p.161f. When Toplady argues that Cranmer subscribed to John Ponet's Catechism, and that such 'asserted the doctrines of predestination, efficacious grace, free justification and final perseverance, in the fullest, strongest and most explicit terms', it is significant that limited atonement is not mentioned, ibid, p.414.

(111) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 2, p.154f.

(112) Toplady's View of Doctrinal Continuity after the Reformation, in The Evangelical Succession, ed. D. N. Samuel (1979), pp.30f.

(113) Writings of John Bradford (Parker Society), (1980 rep.), p.320.

sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world'.(114) The Prayer Book Catechism teaches the catechumen to say that God the Son 'hath redeemed me, and all mankind' whilst it hastens to add, in Calvinist rather than Arminian fashion, that God the Holy Ghost 'sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God'.(115) The Homilies are equally clear: 'So pleasant was this sacrifice and oblation of his Son's death, which he so obediently and innocently suffered, that he would take it for the only and full amends for all the sins of the world.'(116)

As far as the personal views of the reformers are concerned (117), it is not difficult to be sure of their views. Thomas Cranmer (d.1555) himself, whom Wesley does not refer to, says of Christ:

For by His own oblation He satisfied His Father for all men's sins and reconciled mankind unto His grace and favour.....' (118)

In language similar to Calvin's, that 'Christ' is the 'pledge of the divine love' (119), John Hooper (1495-1555) says that Christ died

....for the love of us poor and miserable sinners, whose place he occupied upon the cross, as a pledge, or one that represented the person of all the sinners that ever were, be now, or shall be unto the world's end. (120)

(114) Wesley seems to refer to this in his DA I, p.257.

(115) Wesley could conceivably argue that conditional election logically consists with the wording here, although Article XVII defines the sense in which the word should be taken.

(116) An Homily for Good Friday, Certain Sermons or Homilies appointed to be read in churches (1822), p.384.

(117) It is known that Thomas Cranmer and Nicholas Ridley were the leading architects of the Articles, and that Cranmer was chiefly concerned in the compilation of the Prayer Book, as well as being the author of at least five of the homilies. See A Protestant Dictionary (1904), ed. Wright and Neil, articles under headings: Articles (p.45), Homilies (p.265) and Prayer Book (p.530). For all the reformers, see D.N.B.

Hugh Latimer's(1485-1555) teaching on election and the atone-  
ment exactly parallels Calvin's when he says:

But when we are about this matter (namely election), and are troubled within ourselves whether we be elect or no: we must ever have this maxim or principal rule before our eyes, namely, that God beareth a good will toward us. But you will say, how shall I know that? or how shall I believe that?....He hath sent the same His Son into this world, which hath suffered most painful death for us. Shall I now think that God hateth me? Or shall I doubt of His love towards me? Here you shall see how you shall avoid the scrupulous and most dangerous question of the predestination of God....But if thou begin with Christ and consider His coming into the world, and dost believe that God hath sent Him for thy sake, to suffer for thee, and deliver thee from sin, the devil and hell, then when thou art so armed with the knowledge of Christ, this simple question cannot hurt thee; For thou art in the book of life which is Christ Himself. (121)

Consistent with this remarkable example of pastoral preaching, Latimer does not hesitate to argue that

....Christ shed as much blood for Judas, as he did for Peter: Peter believed it, and therefore he was saved; Judas would not believe, and therefore he was condemned....(122)

Calvin himself would not quarrel with Latimer's logic here, since Judas was present at the last supper. He therefore heard Christ's words 'This is my blood which is shed for you (including Judas). Therefore writes Calvin '....we must note that in Luke (saying for you) He (i.e. Christ) addresses the disciples by name and encourages the faithful as individuals to apply the pouring-out of His blood to their benefit....' (123)

(118) Works (Parker Society), Vol. 1, p.436.

(119) See Kendall, op. cit., p.14.

(120) A Brief and Clear Confession of the Christian Faith (1550), in Later Writings of Bishop Hooper (Parker Society), (1852), p.31. In the Second Homily for Good Friday, the giving of God's Son to the world is described as 'a sure pledge of his love' and that Christ died 'for the sins of the world'. Op. cit., p.395. (Emphases mine)

(121) Given in George Bull, Examen Censurae (1843), pp.339-340.

(122) Sermons (Parker Society), (1844), p.521.

(123) Comment, Mark 14:24.

Hugh Latimer evidently felt free, therefore, to tell unbelievers that Christ had actually died for them (something John Owen would never have done), urging them to believe on that basis:

Catch thou hold of our Saviour....believe in him, be assured in thy heart that he with his suffering took away all thy sins.... (124)

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) was equally of the mind that in preaching the gospel, the preacher was to make a universal declaration of the mercy of God:

The whole generation of man lay in the dominion of the devil....but God had mercy on us all, and sent his Son into this world to die, and with his death to restore us unto life, and to wash us with his blood, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (125)

It is indisputable that the universalist language of the above quotations given, was viewed in precisely the same way as Calvin's similar statements. The Second Homily for Good Friday is sufficient evidence for such a conclusion. Expounding John 3:16, the homily speaks thus of the giving of Christ by the Father:

But to whom did he give him? He gave him to the whole world; that is to say, to Adam, and all that should come after him. (126)

However, the faith which receives Christ - 'a sure trust and confidence in the mercies of God' - renders actual an atonement which is potentially available. Through such faith

We persuade ourselves, that God both hath, and will

(124) Op. cit., pp.329-330.

(125) The Old Faith, in Writings and Translations of Myles Coverdale (Parker Society), (1844), p.78.

(126) Op. cit., p.395.

forgive our sins, that he hath accepted us again into his favour, ....and received us again into the number of his elect people.... (127)

This theological tradition was perpetuated. John Jewel (1522-1571) plainly taught a universal atonement:

Jesu Christ....by the same one only sacrifice, which He once offered upon the cross, hath brought to effect and fulfilled all things, and that for that cause He said when He gave up the ghost, 'It is finished', as though he would signify, that the price and ransom was now full paid for the sin of all mankind. (128)

Closely resembling Calvin's style, Jewel emphasises the need for faith if one is to appropriate the benefits of an otherwise universal atonement:

The death of Christ is available for the redemption of all the world, for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with God the Father: but also that he hath made for thee, a perfect cleansing of thy sins, so that thou acknowledgest no other Saviour, redeemer, mediator, advocate, intercessor, but Christ only; and that thou mayest say with the apostle, that he loved thee, and gave himself for thee. For this is to stick fast to Christ's promise made in his institution, to make Christ thine own, and to apply his merits unto thyself. (129)

Richard Hooker's (1553-1600) adherence to Anglican 'Calvinism' is unquestionable (130), yet he too declared:

It is therefore true, that our Lord Jesus Christ by one most precious and propitiatory sacrifice, which was his body, a gift of infinite worth, offered for the sins of the whole world, hath thereby once reconciled us to God, purchased his general free pardon, and turned away divine indignation from mankind. (131)

(127) Ibid, p.397. (Emphasis mine)

(128) Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae, Works (Parker Society), (1848), Vol. 3, p.66. For Jewel's life, see DNB.

(129) An Homily of the Worthy receiving and reverent esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in Homilies, op. cit., p.413.

(130) See DNB. Hooker warns against overrating the leaders of the Reformation, even Calvin himself. They are not infallible. 'But wise men are men, and the truth is truth.' (Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Works, ed. Keble (1836), pp.171,202.) However, like Calvin, Hooker taught particular election as well as a universal atonement. See Appendix to Book V, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.683f and the sermon The Certainty and Perpetuity of Faith in the Elect, op. cit., Vol. III, pp.583f.



Bishop John Davenant (1570-1641), an English deputy to the Synod of Dort, expounded that view of the atonement taught by the reformers. He rejects the concept of 'mere sufficiency' as Beza had redefined the sufficiency/efficiency formula, viz. 'sufficient for all' in the sense of its intrinsic worth only, not in terms of an actual redemptive provision for all.(132) Davenant accordingly expounds his notion of an 'ordained universal sufficiency' in Christ's death:

The death of Christ is the universal cause of the salvation of mankind, and Christ himself is acknowledged to have died for all men sufficiently, not by reason of the mere sufficiency or of the intrinsic value according to which the death of God (sic) is a price more than sufficient for redeeming a thousand worlds; but by reason of the Evangelical covenant confirmed with the whole human race through the merit of his death, and of the Divine ordination depending upon it, according to which, under the possible condition of faith, remission of sins and eternal life is decreed to be set before every mortal man who will believe it, on account of the merits of Christ. (133)

The quotations selected justify in great measure Wesley's appeal to the position of the Reformed Anglican Church during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Even Wesley's contemporary John Newton (1725-1807), whilst avoiding Arminianism, certainly would share Wesley's aversion for high Calvinism:

The designed extent of this gratuitous removal of sin, by the oblation of 'the Lamb of God' is expressed in a large and indefinite manner: he taketh away the sin of the world. Many of my hearers need not be told, what fierce and

(131) Op. cit., Vol. III, p.71. Like Calvin, Hooker says 'Faith alone maketh Christ's satisfaction ours....' (p.70) See also Michael T. Malone, The Doctrine of Predestination in the Thought of William Perkins and Richard Hooker, ATR, Vol. LII, No. 2, April, 1970, pp.103-117.

(132) See Daniel, op. cit., p.520.

(133) A Dissertation on the Death of Christ, as to its extent and special benefits: ...showing the agreement of the doctrines of the Church of England...with the Holy Scriptures. (1650) (tr. Allport, 1832), pp.401-402. (This was published with Davenant's Commentary on Colossians, Vol. II) (1832). As Packer points out, op. cit., p.24, John Owen was little impressed with Davenant's dissertation. Indeed, it fails to come to terms with all of Owen's objections.

voluminous disputes have been maintained concerning the extent of the death of Christ....That there is an election of grace, we are plainly taught; yet it is not said, 'that Jesus Christ came into the world to save 'the elect', but that he came to save 'sinners', to 'seek and to save them that are lost....'

After rejecting the commercial theory of the atonement, viz. the sufferings of Christ were commensurate with the sins of the elect alone, Newton concludes:

Under the Gospel dispensation, and by it, God commands 'all men everywhere, to repent. All men, therefore, everywhere, are encouraged to hope for forgiveness....And therefore the command to repent implies a warrant to believe in the name of Jesus, as taking away the sin of the world. (134)

This was the tradition perpetuated by Richard Cecil (1748-1810) (135), Thomas Scott (1748-1821) (136), Charles Simeon (1759-1836) (137), E. A. Litton (1813-1897) (138) and J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) in the nineteenth century. Commenting on John 1:29, Ryle says:

I hold as strongly as any one, that Christ's death is profitable to none but to the elect who believe on His name. But I dare not limit and pare down such expressions as the one before us, I dare not say that no atonement has been made, in any sense, except for the elect....When I read that the wicked who are lost, 'deny the Lord that bought them' (II Peter 2:1), and that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself' (II Corinthians 5:19), I dare not confine the intention of redemption to the saints alone. Christ is for every man. (139)

Writing in sympathy with Calvin, Davenant and others, Ryle

- (134) The Lamb of God, The Great Atonement, (Sermon XVI), Works, (1808), Vol. 4, pp.190-195. For Newton, see DNB, also B. Martin, An Ancient Mariner (1960), and B. H. Edwards, Through Many Dangers (1978).
- (135) See DNB. See Cecil's remarks about Owen in Remains of the Rev. Richard Cecil (n.d.), pp.195,207.
- (136) See DNB. See his Theological Works (1839), pp.144n and 139.
- (137) See DNB. For Simeon's conversation with Wesley (Journal, Dec. 20th, 1784) see Horae Homileticae (1819), Preface: I, p.xviif, given in Tyerman, op. cit., pp.510-511, H. C. G. Moule, Charles Simeon (1892), p.100-101, and J. I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (1961), pp.13-14.
- (138) See his Introduction to Dogmatic Theology, ed. P. E. Hughes, (1960 rep.).

rejects the doctrine of limited atonement in strong terms:

I have long come to the conclusion that men may be more systematic in their statements than the Bible, and may be led into grave error by idolatrous veneration of a system. (140)

W. H. Griffith Thomas (1861-1931) (141) represented this tradition in the early twentieth century, since when Anglican evangelicalism has polarised into the Arminian (142) and High Calvinist (143) schools. Neither viewpoint is consistent with Reformation Anglicanism on the subject of the atonement.

The evidence so far consulted would appear to demand certain definite conclusions. For instance, if Wesley cannot justify his Arminian conception of election within the context of Reformation Anglicanism, it is equally the case that Owen cannot do the same with his conception of limited atonement. Arminianism and High Calvinism were both deviations from the reformed view, in which the Gospel was seen by its very nature to possess universal and particular aspects. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli (144) and the English Reformers seemed able to balance the apparently conflicting elements of a doctrine of grace that was both general in provision and special in effect. It is surely arguable that later theological trends viewed such 'balance' as logically inconsistent. The resulting theologies thus appear as diametrically opposed expressions

(139) Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, St. John, Vol. 1, pp.61-62. (Many editions). For Ryle, see DNB supp..

(140) Ibid, p.159.

(141) See Principles of Theology (1930).

(142) See J. R. Stott, Basic Christianity (1958), Ch. 8, 'The Death of Christ', pp.83f.

(143) See J. I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (1961), pp.64-69.

(144) See Jaques Courvoisier, Zwingli, A Reformed Theologian (1964), p.48f.

of a desire for logical consistency, of the kind which suppresses or modifies part of the data in the interests of certain theological emphases.

Sufficient evidence has been adduced to indicate that the reformers would not have recognised Owen's thesis as their own doctrine of the atonement. In a word, it is doubtful whether Calvin would have subscribed to the five points of Calvinism without such qualification. Had Beza High Calvinism not emerged, the Arminian reaction might have been a non-event. Likewise, had English Puritanism, and Owen in particular, retained the character of first generation Anglican Calvinism (145), Wesleyan Methodism might have been a very different theological proposition. Undoubtedly, had Wesley been aware of Calvin's precise view on the atonement, his anti-Calvinist prejudice might have been less pronounced. As a consequence, British evangelicalism might not have endured the trauma of its repeated fragmentations. The continuous sequence of action and reaction (146) from Calvin to Wesley might never have started, had Beza been content to expound the atonement in the manner of Calvin. (See Diagram f) However, once the extremes had been generated, it was the obvious concern of the Amyraldian or Baxterian school to attempt a via media, in which, as with Calvin's

(145) Packer is surely right to deny that Cranmer wrote Article XVII to 'tie the Church of England to Calvin's coat-tails', but that 'he was probably not discouraged....by the thought that Calvin believed the same.' Op. cit., p.32.

(146) Owen's thesis was as much a reaction to Arminianism, as the latter was to Beza's High Calvinism.

Calvinism, the underlying tensions within the biblical gospel were maintained in situ.

Apart from purely historical and logical considerations, the issues must finally be settled in terms of biblical exegesis. It was claimed by both Owen and Wesley that their respective views had scriptural justification. Neither man would tolerate the suggestion that there might be non-exegetical factors contributing to their theological convictions. This much must be true: both cannot be right, and probably neither were right - or wrong - all the time. It must be our concern now to attempt an evaluation of the contrasting theologies of Owen and Wesley (with special reference to the nature and extent of the atonement), through a detailed analysis of their writings.

## 2: The Teleology of the Atonement

In their approaches to the subject of the atonement, Owen and Wesley adopt highly contrasting methodologies. On one hand, Owen's discussion shows the influence of Aristotle, whilst Wesley's might even appear simplistic. (1) As will be seen, this very observation is crucial to an understanding of the entire controversy. Owen clearly thought that the case against Arminianism could not be established without the use of scholastic assumptions, whereas Wesley considered his case unassailable if it was couched in the explicit language of scripture. It is arguable that for both men, their methodologies led to anomalous conclusions. Both claimed to be advocating a truly biblical theology, yet Owen's very method prejudiced a consistently biblical evaluation of the evidence, whilst Wesley's absence of method prevents him from making key distinctions in his exposition. However, such criticisms demand a thorough discussion of the evidence.

It is plausible to suggest that Owen, though an acknowledged prince among the puritan theologians, is in some respects at variance with the genius of early puritanism. The Protestant Reformers' rejection of scholastic theology in favour of a truly biblical one, laid the foundations of a movement which regarded the

(1) See A. Skevington Wood, 'Wesley was content to by-pass the historical theories of atonement and construct his doctrine straight from scripture. He was more interested in announcing biblically-revealed facts than in spinning intricate webs of hypothesis and conjecture.' Op. cit., p.237.

perspicuity of scripture as axiomatic. (2) Whilst Calvin himself did not completely reject aristotelian terminology (3), it was Theodore Beza who was chiefly responsible for reimposing scholastic patterns of thought upon Reformed theology. In this, he was joined by Jerome Zanchi and Peter Martyr (4). Biblical theology was thus expounded deductively rather than inductively, and theory took precedence over the textual data, an approach totally alien to Luther and Calvin. Likewise, English Puritanism outgrew the earlier antagonism to aristotelian philosophy (5). What was said of Baxter's 'subtle metaphysics' (6) might not be true of Owen in point of theological style, but the latter was more aristotelian than the former in method.

Owen's treatise on the extent of the atonement is typically scholastic with regard to its structure. One might have expected an exegesis of the relevant scriptural themes first, followed by various inferences and conclusions. In fact, this order is reversed: theological arguments are advanced and debated first (albeit with some reference to the relevant texts) and the major exegetical discussion follows. There is evidence to suggest that Owen's arguments in the earlier parts prejudice his biblical exegesis in the later parts. (There is, in effect, an incipient rationalism at work, of

- (2) See Packer's Introductory Essay to Luther's The Bondage of the Will, tr. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnson (1957), pp.44-47. 'But we are not entitled....to edit and reduce God's Word (as Luther accuses Erasmus of doing) so as to make it square with our own preconceived ideas.'
- (3) See Institutes, I:16:9; III:14:17; III:23:8. Also, Tony Lane, The Quest for the Historical Calvin, op. cit., p.98.
- (4) Brian G. Armstrong, op. cit., pp.37f and pp.127f. For a defence of Beza, see I. McPhee, op. cit. See also Otto Grundler, Thomism and Calvinism in the Theology of Girolamo Zanchi (Th.D, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1963.)
- (5) Luther had complained in his Annotations on the New Testament (1519), that 'Aristotle is so in vogue that there is scarcely time in the churches to interpret the gospel.' (See Roland

continued/

the kind Luther accused Erasmus of in their debate over the freedom of the will.) A simplified outline of Owen's argument will illustrate this observation:

1. Books I and II are concerned with the divinely appointed 'end' or purpose of the death of Christ.
2. Book III discusses the nature of the Covenant of Grace, and also the nature of the atonement itself, viz the meaning of such terms as redemption, reconciliation, satisfaction and propitiation.
3. Book IV considers the use of biblical terms relating to the extent of the atonement; those texts employed to support universal redemption are analysed and expounded. (7)

Owen also resorts to employing Aristotle's metaphysical ideas in the opening chapters of Book I:

The end of anything is that which the agent intendeth to accomplish in and by the operation which is proper unto its nature, and which applieth itself unto - that which any one aimeth at, and designeth in himself to attain, as a good thing and desirable unto him in the state and condition wherein he is. (8)

- (5) continued/ Bainton, Here I Stand (1950), p.126.) Luther's lectures on the Psalms (1513-1514) suggest that 'the discovery of Augustine was associated with a growing repugnancy for Aristotle'. V. H. H. Green, Luther and the Reformation (1964), p.48. However, while the puritan John Flavel (1628-1691), a contemporary of Owen, accuses 'Epicurus, Aristotle and the Cartesians' of having 'troubled the world with a kind of philosophical enthusiasm', yet he is prepared to admit that 'the helps philosophy affords....are too great to be despised.' See his Pneumatologia: A Treatise on the Soul of Man in Works (1820), (1968 rep.), Vol. 2, pp.485, 489. On the continent, a similar change of attitude was evident. The philosopher Leibniz (1646-1716), sought to 'rehabilitate in some sort the ancient philosophy'. In his view, 'our moderns do less than justice to St. Thomas (i.e. Aquinas) and to other great men of that time and that the sentiments of scholastic philosophers are much sounder than is imagined.' Discourses on Metaphysics (1685), tr. P. G. Lucas and L. Grint (1953), p.17.
- (6) See G. P. Fisher, History of the Christian Church (1904), p.433, and this author's two articles, The Theology of Richard Baxter, in Bibliotheca Sacra (1851), Vol. 9, pp.135-169 and pp.301-329.
- (7) A more detailed analysis of Owen's argument is given by Packer at the end of his introductory essay to the 1959 reprint of Owen's treatise.
- (8) DD, p.160.



As far as Owen is concerned, there was one, exclusive 'end' or purpose in the death of Christ. However, the set of concepts which he uses to make his view explicit, viz, 'end', 'means', 'moving cause', etc., are derived not from the writers of the New Testament, but from Aristotle. The philosopher's conception of teleology governs Owen's understanding of the atonement:

By the end of the death of Christ, we mean in general, both - first, that which his Father and himself intended in it; and, secondly, that which was effectually fulfilled and accomplished by it....The death and blood shedding of Jesus Christ hath wrought, and doth effectually procure, for all those that are concerned in it, eternal redemption, consisting in grace here and glory hereafter. (9)

The concept of 'end' in the above statements is fundamental to Owen's entire argument. It bears the same relationship to the subsequent exposition as does Aristotle's similar statement to the general argument of the Nichomachean Ethics (10), a work Owen often refers to in his writings. A clear parallel exists between Owen's theology and Aristotle's ethics with regard to method.

Recent criticism of Aristotle's concept of the 'single end' is not without relevance to Owen. It has been pointed out that the philosopher could not make coherent sense of the single, exclusive end. At times he argues that people govern their lives by consideration of a single, dominant end, whilst at others he argues for an inclusive end, viz other ends are embraced within the total plan of life. One does not necessarily have to agree

(9) Ibid, p.157.

(10) 'It is thought that every activity, artistic or scientific, in fact, every deliberate action or pursuit has for its object the attainment of some good. We may therefore assent to the view which has been expressed that' the good 'is 'that at which all things aim.' The Ethics of Aristotle, tr. J. A. K. Thompson (1953), (1965 rep.), p.25. James B. Torrance touches on Owen's aristotelianism in The Incarnation and Limited Atonement', EQ, Vol. LV, No. 2, April, 1983.

with Owen's contemporary, Thomas Hobbes, who denied the very idea of a 'summum bonum', in agreeing with W. F. R. Hardie that Aristotle fails to demonstrate his basic thesis. (11)

The relevance of this to Owen is clear. It is questionable whether the scriptural account of the divine purpose is to be seen in terms of a single, exclusive 'end'. Without denying that the ultimate salvation of the church was the chief reason for the death of Christ, it was not the only one; other 'ends' are embraced within the total plan of God, e.g. 'For this purpose (eis touto) was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' (I John 3:8); 'For to this end (telos) Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' (Romans 14:9); 'To this end (eis touto) was I born, and for this cause (eis touto) came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.' (John 18:37). In the same way that actual human experience makes Aristotle's theory of the single exclusive end questionable, it is doubtful whether the biblical evidence will allow Owen to argue as he does. In his application of a very definite aristotelian method, Owen faces the same kind of difficulties found by Aristotle in his ethical theory.

The point at issue here is that Owen is importing alien metaphysical criteria into his exposition, in a manner that

(11) See Hobbes, Leviathan (1651), (1965 rep.), p.49. 'Aristotle sometimes, when he speaks of the final end, seems to be fumbling for the idea of an inclusive end, or comprehensive plan.' The Final Good in Aristotle's Ethics, in Aristotle, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. J. M. E. Moravcsik, (1968), p.297f.

raises important questions regarding the overall character of the gospel. In short, whilst seeking a biblical theology, Owen is not exclusively biblical in method.

By the time of Wesley, Locke, Berkeley and Hume had all contributed to the final dethronement of aristotelian philosophy. Wesley was prepared to admit that Aristotle possessed 'an universal genius' (12), and that his activities in the realm of natural history 'are to be commended' (13). However, during the middle ages when 'Aristotle began to reign', Wesley considered it 'the Schoolmen's misfortune to neglect what was commendable in him, and to follow only what was blameworthy; so as to obscure and pollute all philosophy with abstract, idle, vain speculations'. (14) This decidedly qualified attitude on the part of Wesley is altogether different from Owen's medieval-style references to 'the philosopher' (15) and 'the wise man' (16). Needless to say, there is little trace of Aristotle's influence in Wesley's answer to the very question which occasioned Owen's great treatise. In a sermon based on the text already alluded to - I John 3:8, The End of Christ's Coming, Wesley makes plain his view of the nature and extent of the atonement:

'Behold the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world!' This was a more glorious manifestation of himself than any he had made before. How wonderfully was he

(12) Journal, Works, Vol. 4, p.387.

(13) Ibid.

(14) Of the Gradual Improvement of Natural Philosophy, Works, Vol. 13, p.455. Wesley would certainly exclude Aristotle's logic from his criticism, since his own Compendium of Logic is basically aristotelian. See Works, Vol. 14, p.155f. In his remarks on Locke's Essay, Wesley agrees with Locke's empiricism, yet he considers that 'The operations of the mind are more accurately divided by Aristotle than by Mr. Locke.' See Works, Vol. 13, p.429f. However, the chief issue concerns not only deductive reasoning, nor Aristotle's psychology, but his metaphysics.

(15) Vindiciae Evangelicae, Works, Vol.12, p.112. See also Ibid, 139; Works, Vol.2, p.343; Works, Vol.10, pp.497,541. In Works, Vol.2, p.8, Owen calls Aristotle 'The great philosopher.'

manifested to angels and men, when he 'was wounded for our transgressions;' when he 'bore all our sins in his own body on the tree;' when, having 'by that one oblation of himself once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, he cried out, 'It is finished', and 'bowed his head, and gave up the ghost!' (17)

This statement is typical of Wesley. In quoting John 1:29, Isaiah 53:5, I Peter 2:24, and the prayer of consecration from the Prayer Book Communion Service, he was simply 'announcing biblically revealed facts'. (18) What is true of Wesley's preaching, is true of his writing. In Predestination Calmly Considered, he challenges the kind of thesis advanced by Owen, in terms of a direct appeal to scripture:

Now show me the scriptures wherein God declares in equally express terms, (1) 'Christ' did not die 'for all', but for some only. (2) Christ is not 'the propitiation for the sins of the whole world'....Show me, I say, the scriptures that affirm these....things in equally express terms. You know there are none. (19)

In a most significant statement, Wesley explains his reluctance to theorise over the atonement. Writing to Mary Bishop he confessed:

Our reason is here quickly bewildered. If we attempt to expatiate in this field, we 'find no end, in wandering mazes lost'. But the question is (the only question with me; I regard nothing else), What saith the Scripture? It says, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; ....' (20)

(16) Ibid, p.113.

(17) Sermons, Works, Vol. 6, p.257-8.

(18) Skevington Wood, op. cit.

(19) PCC, p.217.

(20) Works, Vol. 13, p.32. One might almost say that Wesley was 'latitudinarian' here. It is well known that the Latitudinarian theologians were anxious to avoid what they believed were excessive speculations in much seventeenth century theology, puritanism included. Tillotson's words are characteristic: 'Every man ought to govern himself....by what is clear and plain, and agreeable to the main scope and tenour

Still on the subject of Wesley's method, he also utilises the medium of the popular hymn. The editor of the Wesley brothers' poetical works writes that in the controversy with Calvinism, 'the hymns were the great weapons of this warfare. Forcible, earnest and ingenious, they admitted of no easy reply.' (21) As such, they constitute an important source of Wesley's thought. Even though it must be allowed that the hymns, taken as a whole, reflect the joint sentiments of John as well as his brother, the vast majority of these productions were from the pen of Charles. However, Henry Bett is persuaded that the first of the Hymns on God's Everlasting Love (1741) is to be attributed to John and not to Charles.(22) The second verse of 'Father, whose everlasting love' is thoroughly explicit:

Help us Thy mercy to extol,  
Immense, unfathomed, unconfined;  
To praise the Lamb who died for all,  
The general Saviour of mankind.(23)

The hymns then, to which we will have occasion to refer as valid specimens of Wesley's theology, are, together with his more usual prose statements, consistent with his general method. It might be objected that hymns are to be regarded as devotional rather than doctrinal statements, and therefore not suitable evidence of theological conviction. By way of anticipation of such

(20) continued/ of the Bible....whoever suffers himself to be led away by the appearance of some more obscure phrases in the expressions of scripture, and the glosses of men upon them, without regard to this rule, may run into the greatest delusions, may wander eternally, and lose himself in one mistake after another, and shall never find his way out of this endless labyrinth, but by this clue.' Sermon LXI, in Till.I, p.436-7.

(21) The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley, ed. George Osborn, D.D. (1869), Vol. 3, p.xvi.

(22) The Hymns of Methodism (1945), p.26f. Bernard L. Manning writes 'Notice the stab at debased Calvinism in every line.' The Hymns of Wesley and Watts (1942), p.18.

an objection, Osborn writes that for those who wish to discuss the issues in question 'by means of metaphysical reasoning, these hymns will afford no assistance; but such as are content to abide by 'the law and testimony' will find in them a treasure of great price.'(24) In other words, the scriptural emphasis is as evident in the hymns as elsewhere. By way of comparison with another eighteenth century hymn writer, Dr. Erik Routley has written that 'you will search the hymns of Doddridge (25) in vain for any clue to the minutiae of his theology'. (26) This is not true of the Wesleys. There is no theological ambiguity in their poetic productions, despite the nature of the medium. Although Routley describes the 'tone quality' of Doddridge's hymns as Calvinistic, the features of the Wesleys' evangelical Arminianism are more perspicuous and clearly defined in theirs.

It is clear, therefore, that Owen's aristotelian-style conception of the 'end' of Christ's death finds no favour with Wesley. Although even Wesley did not teach that all would be saved, his basic contention is that the immediate 'end' of Christ's death is to make salvation possible to all. Universal atonement means a universal provision of grace:

Thy undistinguishing regard  
Was cast on Adam's fallen race;  
For all Thou hast in Christ prepared  
Sufficient, sovereign, saving grace. (27)

(23) Op. cit., p.3; MHB (1933), 75.

(24) Op. cit., p.xx.

(25) Works, Vol. 3, pp.429f.

(26) The Hymns of Philip Doddridge, in Philip Doddridge, His Contribution to English Religion, ed. G. F. Nuttall (1951), p.68.

(27) Op. cit., p.3.

Consistent with this emphasis, Wesley says that it is God's fixed decree that believers shall be saved'. (28) His Arminian conception of the divine decrees will not admit any suggestion of divine necessitation:

'And the soul that chooseth life shall live, as the soul that chooseth death shall die.' This decree, whereby 'whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate', was indeed from everlasting. (29)

Wesley's position, then, is clear. The purpose of God involves an 'inclusive' rather than an 'exclusive end'. The divine purpose comprehends a general provision of grace and the decree that believers alone should partake of the provision of salvation.

The usual Calvinist objection to this line of reasoning is that the success of God's saving purpose is guaranteed, not by divine power, but by the believer's willingness to respond. Owen sums up the position by saying that 'it is in our power to make the love of God and death of Christ effectual towards us or not'. (30) Ralph Wardlaw, who occupies the middle ground in this controversy, makes a similar observation (31). Packer, a modern writer of the high Calvinist school makes the point that 'what we do every time we pray is to confess our own impotence and God's sovereignty (32).

Even though Wesley's position on the freedom of the will suffers

(28) On Predestination, Works, Vol. 6, p.213.

(29) Free Grace, op. cit., p.367-8.

(30) DD, p.253.

(31) 'If it be said, then, that the sinner's conversion arises from the exercise of his natural powers, we ask: Whence the right exercise of those powers? If it be answered: It is the result of will; our second question is: Whence this good election of the will? If the reply be: From a change of disposition; then our third enquiry is: Whence this change of disposition?' This is the precise turning point in the controversy. If man's disposition is naturally evil, 'enmity against God', then a self-converting power, the power of willing to change this disposition to good, is a palpable contradiction in terms.

frequently from caricature, it is not without an element of paradox. On one hand, he asserts that man in his natural sinful state 'is still in bondage and fear, by reason of sin....Such is the freedom of his will; free only to evil.' (33) However, no man is any longer in his natural sinful state. As a result of common grace, Wesley asserts 'that there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man' (34). It is grace, therefore, which enables man to respond to the Gospel, not his mere, unaided powers. Yet still, the problem remains: does the efficacy of grace depend upon the God who is being gracious, or upon the individual's willing response to grace? As Wardlaw says, 'This is the precise turning point in the controversy.' In other words, does God actually save men, or do men allow God to save them?

Wesley partially considers the implication of this position when he anticipates the objection: 'Why then are not all men saved?' His answer, in explicitly biblical terms, reveals why he took the Arminian side of the debate:

Whatever be the cause of their perishing, it cannot be God's will, if the oracles of God are true; for they declare, 'He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' (II Peter 3:9) 'He willeth that all men should be saved.' And they, secondly, declare what is the cause why all men are not saved, namely, that they will not be saved: so our Lord expressly says, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.' (John 5:40) (35)

- (31) continued/ Systematic Theology (1856), Vol. 2, p.435-6. For all his criticism of Calvinism, Richard Watson fails to deal satisfactorily with this point. Speaking of regeneration, he says, 'God hath appointed this change to be affected in answer to our prayers.' Theological Institutes, Vol. 2, p.267.
- (32) 'In the first place, you give God thanks for your conversion ....Your thanksgiving is itself an acknowledgement that your conversion was not your own work, but His work.' Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (1961), p.11-12.
- (33) The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption, Works, Vol. 5, p.97.
- (34) PCC, p.221. Richard Watson argues that, as a result of 'common grace', 'the power to choose that which is good, in some respects, and as a first step to the entire and exclusive choice of good in

continued/



In his anxiety to preserve the justice of God's dealings with men (that those who are lost are not consigned to their fate by some absolute decree of reprobation), Wesley does not consider the objection that the entire purpose of grace might be fruitless if left to men. However, he is prepared to say:

A world He suffered to redeem;  
For all He hath th'atonement made:  
For those that will not come to Him,  
The ransom of His life was paid. (36)

Owen gives his reasons why the death of Christ could never be ineffectual, and why the Arminian thesis is, in his view, consequently erroneous:

Why, then, are not all saved? In a word, the redemption wrought by Christ being the full deliverance of the persons redeemed from all misery, wherein they were inwrapped, by the price of his blood, it cannot possibly be conceived to be universal unless all be saved: so that the opinion of the Universalists is unsuitable to redemption. (37)

On balance then, it is arguable that the positions of both Owen and Wesley are inadequate, albeit for very different reasons. Owen's conception of the 'one end' of the atonement does not seem to square with the broader setting given to it in the biblical writings. In this respect, Wesley's account appears more satisfying. However, Wesley's broader view does not allow for any divinely effectual purpose which does not hinge upon the will of man. This view is hardly consistent with the Judeo-Christian

(34) continued/ the highest degree, is in man's possession, ....' Op. cit., p.436. This somewhat hesitant remark invites the question, 'What frustrates this power of conversion in so many?' Watson replies, 'the moral state of the heart', ibid, p.364. But, does not grace remedy this? If not, then the grace which enables man to choose the good is not sufficient, by itself, to overcome the heart's natural resistance.

(35) Free Grace, op. cit., p.364.

(36) Hymns on God's Everlasting Love, op. cit., p.4.

(37) Op. cit., p.261.

conception of God as sovereign Lord in both providence and grace. In short, God is no longer 'Lord' and man ceases to be 'mere man'. In this respect, Owen's scheme has the advantage of recognising the essential distinction between the creator and the creature, a distinction which ultimately fails to harmonize with the logic of Wesley's view.

It is arguable therefore that Owen's aristotelian theorising and Wesley's total reluctance to theorise lead alike to anomalous positions. No doubt both men were conditioned by the spirit of the ages in which they lived. Owen's approach reflects the confidence of the age of reason, whereas Wesley's distrust of reason is indicative of the so called 'enlightenment' period, when empiricism began to challenge the claims of speculative rationalism. As has been suggested in chapter one, the two positions appear extremist by implication. The overall balance of scripture appears to be disregarded by both men. Owen's position commits him to demonstrating that the texts cited by Wesley in support of a universal atonement will bear a different interpretation, and Wesley must demonstrate that in appealing only to scripture he is not in fact being influenced by hidden assumptions in his exposition of certain texts.

The position of Richard Baxter commends itself immediately as a view which attempts to combine the basic emphases of Owen and

Wesley. Against Owen, Baxter argues that there was more than 'one end', to the death of Christ, and against Wesley's position he contends for an effectual purpose in the atonement. Baxter considers that the biblical teaching demands a position which possesses universal and particular dimensions:

The Father giveth up to Christ as Redeemer the whole lapsed cursed reparable world, (the several parts to several uses) and especially his chosen to be eventually and infallibly saved, and promiseth to accept his sacrifice and performance, and to make him head over all things to his church. (38)

In contrast with Owen's exclusive particularism, Baxter insists that the total character of the gospel demands a much broader scenario than Owen allows:

Christ's sacrifice for sin, and his perfect holiness, are so far satisfactory and meritorious for all men, as they render Christ a meet object for that faith in him which is commanded men, and no man shall be damned for want of a Saviour to die for him, and fulfil all righteousness, but only for the abusing or refusing of his mercy. (39)

Such a statement would receive the approval of Wesley if not of Owen. However, such is only half the story, since Baxter rejects the idea that the ultimate efficacy of the atonement is in human hands. Baxter believes all the benefits of salvation are presented as a 'conditional deed of gift to all the world':

But only the elect accept them and possess them. From which we certainly infer, that Christ never absolutely intended or decreed that his death should eventually put all men in possession of these benefits. And yet that he did intend and decree that by his death all men should have a conditional gift of them. (40)

(38) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.38. (Emphasis mine.)

(39) Ibid, p.51.

(40) Ibid, p.53.

Baxter therefore is committed to a dualistic understanding of the atonement: there is an unlimited provision of grace, but a limited acceptance of it, a distinction which Wesley would not argue with. The difference of opinion concerns the ultimately decisive factor in salvation. Baxter's reply is very different from Wesley's:

Christ therefore died for all, but not for all equally, or with the same intent, design or purpose: so that the case of difference in the matter of redemption, is resolved into that of predestination. (41)

Predictably, Baxter's solution would be unsatisfactory whether viewed from either Owen or Wesley's standpoint. Even though Baxter specifically rejects Calvin's double predestination theory (42), and also the reformer's necessitarianism (43), Wesley would feel it inconsistent to hold unconditional election and conditional reprobation (44). As far as Owen is concerned, he would think it anomalous for God to provide grace for those who were to perish for ever. Christ therefore 'shed his blood in vain', to which Baxter replies:

By your own reckoning it is not in vain: For you say that God's justice is glorified on unbelievers, and that this is his end. And what is that justice, but the punishing of men for rejecting a Christ that died for them, and grace that was procured and tendered to them? (45)

The position emerges more clearly. Owen believes that grace

(41) Ibid, p.53.

(42) 'God predestinath men to faith, and perseverance, and to glory....not....upon the foresight of faith and perseverance: But that he predestinath or decreeth men to damnation, only on the foresight of final impenitence and infidelity, but not to impenitence or infidelity itself.' CT, Bk. 1, Part 1, p.68.

(43) 'The will of God is necessity, and that everything is necessary which he has willed.' Institutes, III:23:8.

(44) See Wesley, Free Grace, Works, Vol. 7, p.358f.

(45) CT, Bk. 2, p.66.

is special to the elect, Wesley that it is common to all men. Baxter maintains that, rightly understood, grace is both common and special. He insists that 'many sincere Christians' are mistaken to 'judge them inconsistent'. (46) As such, he argues that, amongst other considerations, the death of Christ not only guarantees efficacious grace for the elect, but conditional grace for mankind generally. This basic dualism in Baxter's thought will require a more thorough examination later in relation to the views of Owen and Wesley. Suffice it to say at this stage, that it arguably points the way to a tenable alternative to the relatively 'extreme' and somewhat inadequate view-points of Owen and Wesley.

This brief outline of Baxter's view of the teleology of the atonement provides the setting for an examination of another vitally important aspect of Owen's teaching. Baxter's solution to the impasse created by the Calvinist-Arminian controversy is to adopt a dualistic conception of grace. From the evidence adduced so far, one would conclude that Owen's view of grace is that it is always special and thus, in view of election and predestination, efficacious. Indeed, the dominant theme of the Death of Death is that the atonement of Christ 'doth effectually procure' for the elect 'grace here and glory hereafter'. (47) Book II commences with a restatement of this view, viz. that Christ has procured for the elect alone 'faith'

(46) Ibid, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.53. Baxter's distinction between general and particular undoubtedly reflects the influence of Ramist logic. For Pierre de la Ramee, see Toon, Hypercalvinism, pp.24f and references in Armstrong, op. cit., p. 37f and p.125f. See also W. J. Ong, Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue, (1958). Although the Ramean bifurcated logic had ousted Aristotelian logic, neither Baxter nor Amyraut seem to make much reference to Ramus. Whilst the scholastic methodology of aristotelianism was not a feature of the Saumur Academy, Aristotle was still frequently quoted in 'matters of common sense.' Armstrong, op. cit., p.46.

(47) DD, p.159.

and 'under the name of faith we comprise all saving grace that accompanies it'. (48) In Book III we are told that 'Christ....by his death, did merit and purchase' for the elect 'all those things which in scripture are assigned to be the fruits and effects of his death.' (49) Owen further insists that 'these things are not communicated to and bestowed upon all' (50) because, as we read in Book IV, 'the atonement was not for' any besides the elect. (51) Grace, then, is exclusive and particular. It is 'special', and, by definition, not general or common.

It is all the more remarkable therefore to discover that Owen does adopt a distinction between common and special grace, very much in the style of Baxter. The evidence for this is totally absent in the Death of Death, but surprisingly frequent in Owen's other writings. This very fact poses serious difficulties for the overall coherency of Owen's theology of atonement and grace.

Of particular historical as well as theological interest is a very clear statement in A Display of Arminianism. This was not only Owen's first published work, but also a prelude to the Death of Death, published just four years later. Owen states his view thus:

Concerning grace itself, it is either common or special. Common or general grace consisteth in the external revelation of the will of God by His Word, with some illumination of the

(48) Ibid, p.202.

(49) Ibid, p.287.

(50) Ibid, p.288.

(51) Ibid, p.383.

mind to perceive it, and correction of the affections not too much to contemn it, and this, in some degree or other, to some more, to some less, is common to all that are called. Special grace is the grace of regeneration, comprehending the former, adding more spiritual acts, but especially presupposing the purpose of God, on which its efficacy doth chiefly depend. (52)

If any criticism of the common-special grace distinction is to be levelled against Baxter, it must also be applied to Owen. Indeed the entire orthodox puritan movement seemed to acquiesce in the distinction (53), and there is evidence that Calvin also employed it (54). Calvinists have not always agreed as to the significance of 'common grace'. Although the idea has not been denied, it has usually been confined to providence rather than salvation. Louis Berkhof, a modern Calvinist, inclines to this understanding, as do the older Dutch theologians Kuyper and Bavinck (55). However, Berkhof appears to make an important concession when he says that common grace 'does not effect the salvation of the sinner, though in some of its forms (external calling and moral illumination), it may be closely connected with the economy of redemption and have a soteriological aspect'. (56)

Berkhof's apparent hesitation in linking common grace with salvation seems to be the result of a distinction he borrows from Dr. H. Kuiper between 'general common grace' and 'covenant common grace'. The former is considered 'universal' whereas the latter

(52) Dis. A., p.134.

(53) Chapter 10 of the Westminster Confession: 'Of Effectual Calling' states that 'This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, ....Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved. (1962 rep.), p.54f. (emphasis mine.) The Savoy Declaration of the Independents (1658), (See The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, ed. A. G. Matthews (1959), p.89), and The London Confession of the Baptists (1677, pub, 1689), (See The Baptist Confession of Faith (1958 ed.), p.23), use identical language in their respective chapters on the subject.

is restricted 'to all those who live in the sphere of the covenant, whether they belong to the elect or not'. (57) This common grace which Berkhof suggests may be related to salvation, must be understood as common in the sense of being ordinary 'without being general or universal'. (58) Berkhof is anxious to state that 'This conception of common grace should be carefully distinguished from that of the Arminians, who regard common grace as a link in the ordo salutis and ascribe to it saving significance.' (59)

Berkhof argues that it is in the sense of 'covenant common grace' that we are to understand the use of the phrase 'common grace' in the Westminster Confession. This presumably applies to general puritan usage and also to Owen's theology. Even if this view applies to Owen's concept of common grace, it cannot be denied that it does entail redemptive connotations. There also seems to be no hesitation in the mind of Baxter in assuming that 'common grace' possesses a 'soteriological aspect'. It is equally manifest that Owen himself defines common grace in the same way as Baxter:

For instance, even common illumination and conviction of sin have, in their own nature, a tendency unto sincere conversion. They have so in the same kind as the law hath to bring us unto Christ. (60)

Consistent with Baxter's view that common grace is sufficient, not for salvation, but to help men 'nearer to salvation' (61), Owen

(54) See chapter 1, note 65.

(55) See A. Kuyper, De Gemeene Gratie (1902), and H. Bavinck, Gereformeerde Dogmatiek (1906-11). See also Berkhof's Systematic Theology (1963 rep.), p.434. After stating, incorrectly, that Calvin's doctrine of common grace has no direct relationship with salvation, Berkhof defines common grace thus: 'It curbs the destructive power of sin, maintains in a measure the moral order of the universe, thus making an orderly life possible, distributes in varying degrees gifts and talents among men, promotes the development of science and art, and showers untold blessings upon the children of men.' Ibid, p.434.

(56) Op. cit., p.436. (emphasis mine.)

(57) Ibid, p.435. See H. Kuiper, Calvin on Common Grace (1928).



says that when 'common illumination and conviction' do not bring someone to Christ,

It is always from the interposition of an act of wilfulness and stubbornness in those enlightened and convicted. They do not sincerely improve what they have received, and faint not merely for want of strength to proceed, but, by a free act of their own wills, they refuse the grace which is farther tendered unto them in the gospel. This will, and its actual resistance unto the work of the Spirit, God is pleased in some to take away. It is, therefore, of sovereign grace when and where it is removed. (62)

Owen therefore agrees that there is a species of grace which is wider in extent than the special efficacious grace received by the elect. His view of this common or general grace is virtually indistinguishable from Baxter's teaching. As such, it is not the same doctrine taught in the Death of Death, where Owen emphatically asserts that the 'one end' of the atonement was to purchase grace for the elect. If there is such a reality as common grace, the question which demands an answer is: what is the origin of such grace? Put alternatively, who purchased this grace? Owen himself provides an answer in his treatise on the Holy Spirit: 'All grace is originally intrusted in and with Jesus Christ...He is made the head unto the whole new creation, not only of power and rule, but of life and influence.' (63) Are we to understand that Christ has purchased common as well as special grace? According to the Death of Death, this was not so, but Owen's other writings suggest a very

(58) Ibid, p.435.

(59) Ibid, p.437.

(60) HS, p.236.

(61) CT, Bk. 2, p.145.

(62) HS, p.236-7.

(63) Ibid, p.414.

different conclusion. In other words, Owen's overall teaching involves him in a contradiction, with serious consequences for his doctrine of a limited procurement of grace. In short, he either is obliged to adopt a position hardly distinguishable from Baxter's, or he must renounce his view of common grace. If Owen wishes to retain his view of common grace, then it must affect his view of the teleology of the atonement. There is an 'inclusive end' involved. More than the salvation of the elect was comprehended in it. Baxter expresses this point as follows:

Whatever good Christ giveth to any, that he from eternity decreed to give them. But we are agreed that he giveth not salvation to all men, and yet he doth give many and great mercies to all men. (64)

If the atonement is not the meritorious source of common as well as special grace, then all those theologians from Calvin onwards, who speak of common grace in soteriological terms cannot do so without a broader view of the atonement than Owen's. The absurd alternative is, in Baxter's words, to say that 'God giveth it to one part of men for Christ's death, and to the other part not for his death, but as without it.' (65)

The only consistent conclusion is that, Owen must modify the doctrine of the atonement taught in the Death of Death to coincide more or less with Baxter's position:

Therefore in this sense Christ died for all, but not

(64) EC, p.160.

(65) Ibid, p.160. Since common grace is viewed soteriologically and not merely providentially - even by Berkhof, it is thus impossible to reconcile common grace with a strictly limited atonement. Berkhof's treatment of this point is totally unconvincing. (op. cit., p.444) Even a common providential grace is arguably rooted in the atonement. Only by denying common grace in toto can the particularist position be maintained.

for all alike or equally; that is He intended good to all, but not any equal good with an equal intention. Whatever Christ giveth men in time as the fruit of his death, that he decreed from eternity to give them. (66)

It is a thought of considerable interest, that a 'Baxterian' could happily concur with most of the universalist statements of Wesley's hymns, notwithstanding the qualified universalism advocated by Baxter. Even the couplet already quoted:

'For those that will not come to Him,  
The ransom of His life was paid.'

would be acceptable to Baxter as stating the grounds on which those who wilfully reject the gospel are justly punished.

As has been suggested, the other course open to Owen is to renounce his teaching on common grace altogether, in favour of the exclusivist position of the Death of Death. It is not without some significance, that this is precisely what did happen in the thinking of those who maintained the exclusive thesis of Owen's treatise. This occurred in the transition from the high-Calvinism of Owen to the hyper-Calvinism (67) of John Gill (1696-1771), the eminent eighteenth century particular Baptist theologian (68). Whereas Owen taught that 'all conviction of sin is from and by' the Holy Spirit, even 'common' as well as 'special' convictions, Gill totally rejected the idea. Grace is, by its very nature, something effectual.

(66) Ibid, p.160.

(67) Whilst it is acknowledged that the prefixes 'high' (derived from Old English) and 'hyper' (derived from Greek) have much the same meaning, they are used to facilitate an important distinction. High-Calvinism denotes a belief in limited atonement accompanied by the preaching of free offers of grace, whereas hypercalvinism rejected the latter part, viz the free offers of grace, in the belief that it could not logically co-exist with limited atonement. The term hypercalvinist is not used here in any pejorative sense. See G. F. Nuttall, Northamptonshire and the 'Modern Question', in JTS, new series, xvi (1965), p.110 for comments on this point.

(68) For Gill, see DNB and Michael R. Watts, The Dissenters (1978) p.456f. Also, Daniel, op. cit.

In which case, there are no common operations of the spirit, even for those 'who enjoy the outward ministry of the word'. God 'does not vouchsafe his spirit to convince of sin' those who are not chosen to salvation. Those who are chosen, God 'calls them effectually by his grace'. (69) It would appear then that Gill is being more consistent than Owen (given the thesis of Owen's Death of Death), in rejecting a wider conception of grace than the one the thesis logically demands. If Owen wishes to retain common grace, then he must adopt Baxter's position. If he wishes to maintain the more exclusive thesis, then his only choice is to adopt Gill's position. Owen's overall theology is beset by a basic contradiction which, as we shall see, seriously prejudices his attempts at presenting a truly biblical view of the gospel. Superficially speaking, Wesley's 'scriptural' approach would seem unassailable. But, for all his unwillingness to theorise, Wesley cannot avoid the labyrinth of issues raised by his relatively simplistic treatment. The onus is on him to demonstrate that the texts on which he builds his case cannot sustain the kind of exegesis Owen believes they deserve. Wesley's weakness is quite as serious as Owen's contradiction. Both positions, for different reasons, must surely be judged inadequate thus far. Having considered the teleology of the atonement, we must proceed to consider other aspects of the controversy, and the dilemmas they pose for our theologians.

(69) A Collection of Sermons and Tracts (1773), Vol. 2, p.123. The caution with which Owen employed the term irresistible grace, preferring the less deterministic term efficacious (Works, Vol. 10, p.134), is also cast aside by Gill. 'No man is or can be truly converted to God, but by his powerful, efficacious and irresistible grace.' Op. cit., p.124. See also O. C. Robison, 'The Legacy of John Gill', BQ, XXIV, (1971); R. E. Seymour, John Gill, Baptist Theologian (1697-1771), Ph.D thesis, Edinburgh (1954); C. Daniel, op. cit.

3: Some Theological Dilemmas

It is not difficult to possess some sympathy for the particular emphases made by both Owen and Wesley in their discussions of the atonement. An atonement which merely makes salvation possible is as unthinkable for Owen as an atonement not available for all is, in Wesley's view, unjust. Owen is anxious to assert the wisdom and power of God, whilst Wesley is concerned to maintain God's justice and compassion. It is hardly surprising to find Baxter equally intent on preserving the harmony of the divine attributes.

We have seen that the logic of Wesley's argument forbids the idea that the will of God is the ultimately decisive factor in human salvation. The success and efficacy of the atonement depends upon the human will. The certainty of the divine purpose is rooted in a foreknowledge, rather than a foreordination of the human response. It is difficult not to detect a sense of reductio ad absurdam in Wesley's implication that, inevitably, omnipotence is an attribute of the human, and not the divine will. However, Wesley is quick to deny that God possesses the kind of absolute sovereignty attributed to Him by the Calvinists. 'All his attributes are inseparably joined', says Wesley. It is wrong, therefore, to 'suppose

his justice might have been separate from his other attributes, from his mercy in particular.' (1)

Wesley discusses the sovereignty of God with especial reference to reprobation. In his view, 'God does not here assert a right of reprobating any man.' (2) There is a good deal of vehemence mixed with keenness of argument as Wesley seeks to demonstrate that 'The sovereignty of God is....never to be brought to supercede his justice.' Why, he, asks, are any condemned everlastingly?

For their having done evil? They could not help it.... Shall he then condemn them for what they could not help? Shall the Just, the Holy One of Israel, adjudge millions of men to everlasting pain, because their blood moved in their veins? ....But could they even thus have escaped from sin? Not without that grace which you suppose God had absolutely determined never to give them. And yet you suppose him to send them into eternal fire, for not escaping sin! that is, in plain terms, for not having that grace which God had decreed they should never have! O strange justice! What a picture do you draw of the Judge of all the earth! (3)

This is the fundamental reason for Wesley's rejection of Owen's thesis of a limited procurement of grace. Wesley never entertained the possibility of universal salvation, but he dare not contemplate and unjust condemnation of the unbeliever by God:

He will punish no man for doing anything which he could not possibly avoid; neither for omitting anything which he could not possibly do. Every punishment supposes the offender might have avoided the offence for which he is punished; otherwise, to punish him would be palpably unjust, and inconsistent with the character of God our Governor. (4)

(1) PCC, p.209.

(2) Ibid, p.210.

(3) Ibid, p.213.

(4) Thoughts upon God's Sovereignty, Works, Vol. 10, p.349. Wesley's argument ('ought implies can') has an interesting parallel with Kant's ethical theory. As Wesley was opposing theological determinism, so, in the same century, Kant was opposing physical determinism. 'The action to which the 'ought' applies must indeed be possible under natural conditions.' Critique of Pure Reason (1781), tr. N. Kemp Smith (1964 rep.), p.473. See also, C. D. Broad, Five Types of Ethical Theory (1967 rep.), p.135f.

In other words, the justice of God demands that grace be universal. Thus the atonement had to be all-embracing in provision, even though many might, in the event, reject the grace thereby provided. This, it must be admitted, touches on the weakest and most vulnerable point of the Calvinistic case. According to the central thesis of the Death of Death, Owen is really unable to come to terms with the kind of objection advanced by Wesley. He admits the 'inexcusableness' (5) of those who reject the 'word of reconciliation' without demonstrating the actual basis of their guilt. Herein lies the dilemma facing Owen. However, something of an answer can be made to Wesley if Owen's teaching on 'common grace' is consulted. Elsewhere, as we have discovered, Owen teaches that common grace has 'a tendency unto sincere conversion' and that those who are not saved 'fail to improve what they have received' not from 'want of strength' but from 'a free act of their wills'. (6) However, like Baxter, Owen teaches that whilst common grace is not of itself sufficient for salvation, it serves as an introduction to special, saving grace. For Wesley, a grace which does not save - as 'common grace' must be defined, is of little value, since the outcome is still dependent, as Owen insists, on 'sovereign (i.e. 'electing') grace'. As such, Wesley can only despise the Calvinist conception of 'common grace':

(5) DD, p.314.

(6) HS, p.236.

Thou hast compell'd the lost to die,  
Hast reprobated from Thy face;  
Hast others saved, but them pass'd by,  
Or mock'd with only damning grace. (7)

Therefore the grace provided in the atonement must be efficacious. Wesley insists that it is 'sufficient, sovereign saving grace'. In which case, if he is to reject entirely a 'species' of grace which in some instances does not save, Wesley must than be embarrassed by the question 'Why then are not all saved?' For he wishes to say:

Lift up the standard of Thy cross,  
And all shall own Thou diedst for all. (8)

The dilemma ultimately facing Wesley is that he believes in an efficacious grace which is not always efficacious. To dress his conception of universal grace in Calvinistic language involves an absurd contradiction. However, the dilemma facing Wesley is no more problematic than Owen's inability to demonstrate how God can justly punish those for rejecting Christ, if grace was not available for them.

It would seem that one of the consequences of this kind of discussion is to be confronted by the apparently intrinsic insolubility of the entire debate. Controversy which hovers at the logical extremities of ideas invites the suggestion that, where Christian theology is concerned, deductive processes can make

(7) Hymns on God's Everlasting Love, op. cit., p.5.

(8) Ibid, p.5.



nonsense of the unity of Scripture. There can be no question that the just punishment of unbelief (9) and the restricted acceptance of grace universally to be offered (10) are equally biblical ideas. The logic of Owen's position stresses the latter at the expense of the former, whereas the reverse is true in Wesley's case. In short, if Christ has not procured a general grace, how can unbelievers be justly punished, on Owen's thesis; and if Christ has procured efficacious grace for all, then why are not all saved, on Wesley's thesis?

The antinomies involved in the discussion argue the need for theological synthesis, even if that synthesis itself might not be without paradoxes. As such, from the evidence considered thus far, Baxter's deliberate attempt to produce a via media might prove to be a coherent alternative, if only in terms of a solution which possesses the least degree of paradox. The utility of this observation must be tested in the continuing discussion.

In a powerful piece of reasoning, Owen considers what must be, in his view, a 'dilemma to our universalists'. He prepares the ground of his case by inquiring into the nature of Christ's sufferings. In dying in 'our stead', Owen insists that the 'punishment due to our sin' which Christ suffered was the 'pains of hell, in their nature and being' (11). If, therefore, he died for all,

(9) 'He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed....' John 3:18.

(10) 'For all men have not faith.' II Thessalonians 3:2.

(11) DD, p.173.

how is that 'not all' are 'freed from the punishment of all their sins?' (12)

The elect are released from punishment precisely because of the substitution of Christ on their behalf. If Christ has therefore died for all, then to punish anyone for whom he died is to exact double payment for sin. Basic to Owen's reasoning is, of course, a theory of the atonement which equates the sufferings of Christ quantitatively with the total number of the sins of the elect. The chief strength of Owen's reasoning depends on the analogy between sins and debts. However, analogy does not prove identity. Unlike debts, and other commercial concepts, guilt is a qualitative, and not a quantitative notion. Owen's case ignores the crucial point that moral and commercial concepts are quite different, and that metaphors obscure rather than elucidate truth when they are 'over done'. This matter will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, when the nature of the atonement will be considered separately. However, with the sin of unbelief in mind, Owen comes straight to the point in stating 'the universalists' dilemma'. There is a triple choice:

God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, either all the sins of all men, or all the sins of some men, or some of the sins of all men. (13)

The last possibility is quickly dealt with. Men have some

(12) Ibid, p.173.

(13) Ibid, p.173.

sins to answer for themselves, ruling salvation out completely, if Christ has only made a partial atonement. Owen's own view is the second position 'that Christ in their stead and room suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the world'. It is unthinkable therefore that any should suffer again in hell if Christ has already borne their punishment. In posing the question, 'Why, then, are not all freed from the punishment of all their sins?' , Owen anticipates the universalists' answer, 'Because of their unbelief; they will not believe.' Owen's answer is a highly compelling piece of logic:

But this unbelief, is it a sin or not: If not, why should they be punished for it? If it be, then Christ underwent the punishment due to it, or not. If so, then why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he died from partaking of the fruit of his death? If he did not, then did he not die for all their sins. (14)

Owen is constrained to argue as he does for two reasons. Firstly, his commercialist view of the atonement demands a strictly limited procurement of grace, and, secondly, there is a causal connection between the atonement and the gift of faith. These assumptions are both questionable, and they invite criticism. With regard to the former, unbelievers are guilty of rejecting nothing, if no grace is provided for them. With regard to the latter, general exhortations to believe have no real significance. Since the New Testament does attribute guilt to those who reject the gospel, and since general offers of grace are made, then Owen's position must be suspect.

(14) Ibid, p.174.

However, the most fundamental objection to Owen's statement arises from the nature of the punishment sin deserves and the precise nature of Christ's satisfaction. This matter will be central to the discussion in the next chapter, but a preliminary observation is necessary at this juncture.

Assuming a commercialist context, Owen refuses to admit that Christ could pay sin's penalty for any who might suffer it again. In short, penal duplication is inconsistent with divine justice and wisdom. However, the cogency of Owen's case depends upon Christ's satisfaction being the exact payment due to the sins of the elect, of which unbelief is the chief. This is where Owen's argument fails. Since the penalty for all sin is to suffer the 'pains of hell, in their nature and being' eternally, with no hope of reprieve, Christ did not therefore suffer the identical punishment. His resurrection terminated his banishment. Although the guilt of sinners occasioned his sufferings, he did not actually undergo the exact punishment due to anyone's sins. His satisfaction amounted to a qualitative equivalent, acceptable to God in lieu of the punishment threatened to sinners. Owen's commercialism assumes that Christ suffered the same quantitative penalty as that threatened to sinners, which is manifestly not the case. Therefore, to threaten with eternal punishment those who reject the benefits Christ died to procure for them is not to

duplicate punishment. Furthermore, Owen's statement above fails to distinguish between the guilt occasioned by unbelief, and the psychological state of unbelief (15). It is consequently valid to argue that Christ's sufferings were directly related to the guilt of unbelief, yet only indirectly related to the removal of unbelief. The remedy for the guilt does not imply an automatic removal of the cause in every case. Christ's offer of himself to Jews whom he knew would reject him (16) and Peter's comparable preaching in similar circumstances (17) undoubtedly confirm this point. Both 'offers' were indiscriminate.

An additional objection to Owen's reasoning comes from an unexpected quarter. Indeed, Owen's pastoral experience would show him that true believers - or those who have grounds to regard themselves as elect - continue to have problems with the sin of unbelief. (18) Should they have such problems if Christ has died to purchase faith for them, or are they perhaps deceived? It certainly cannot be that lapses of unbelief in the elect are not regarded as sin, because Christ has been punished for it. If unbelief in the Christian does hinder him from enjoying the fulness of grace subjectively (yet Christ is understood to have died for him), this is no different in principle from saying that total unbelief in the non-Christian hinders

- (15) This is more evident in a later re-statement of his argument in Book III, DD, p.249.
- (16) John 6:27f, especially v.32, 'my father giveth you the true bread from heaven....'
- (17) Acts 3:12f, especially v.26, '....God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.'
- (18) Owen is conclusive on this. 'I cannot think that they ever pray aright who never pray for the pardon of unbelief, for the removal of it, and for the increase of faith. If unbelief be the greatest of sins, and if faith be the greatest of the gifts of God, we are not Christians if these things are not one principal part of the matter of our prayers.' Discourse of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer (1682), Works, Vol. 4, p.277.

him from 'enjoying the fruits of Christ's death', and yet that Christ has died for him too.

A final objection to Owen's statement concerns a matter touched on already, viz, the basis of the unbeliever's guilt. It is clear from Paul's argument in the early chapters of Romans that human guilt is established without reference to the gospel itself. Guilt is defined in terms of the law. As such, condemnation is not based on a rejection of the gospel but on a violation of the law (19). However, there is abundant evidence, in the Old Testament as well as the New, that a very significant component of human guilt is related to the rejection of the offers of divine mercy (20). Recalling the thrust of Wesley's earlier argument (concerning the justice of God's proceedings against unbelief) one must therefore ask Owen, 'Why does God punish unbelievers for rejecting mercy which was never purchased for them?' What are they guilty of rejecting, if not the offered pardon of their sins through Christ? In short, does not the evidence suggest that some provision has been made, even for those who reject it? If the atonement relates only to the elect, as Owen maintains, then it is doubtful justice to condemn anyone for rejecting what was never designated for them. In which case, if Owen's case is questionable on these grounds, then it must make sense to suggest that the sins of the non-elect are related to Christ's sufferings.

(19) See Romans 3:19-20.

(20) See especially Isaiah 1:16-20; 55:1-7; Ezekiel 18:29-32. In addition to the clear statements in John 3:18 and Mark 16:15, the Apostle's language is uncompromising '....the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' II Thesalonians 1:7b,8.

An illustration may not be out of place. Let us suppose a wealthy man has two sons. Let us also suppose that, on their father's death, the two sons are to inherit equal proportions of their father's wealth. If, in the event, one of the sons ungratefully rejects his share of the inheritance, it only makes sense to blame him for ingratitude if provision had been designated for him in the will. Had there been no provision whatever, then ingratitude would not arise and blame would be meaningless. There would be nothing to reject. Owen's argument surely involves a similar fallacy.

As has been pointed out already, much of the Death of Death is directed against Arminian universalism, though not exclusively so. Another variation on the theme of universalism is, of course, the Amyraldian theory. (21) To Owen, this was known as the 'conditional system', and William Goold says that Owen 'dwells with peculiar keen-ness and reiteration of statement upon a refutation of the conditional system' (22). By the time Owen had written his treatise, Amyraldian-style contributions had been made by many divines, both continental and British. When Baxter published his Catholick Theologie in 1675, he was quick to cite these authorities in support of his own position. The basic features of this view have been noted in Chapter one, where it was observed that although the salvation of the elect is guaranteed, a conditional salvation is

(21) See Packer's comments on this in his introductory essay, op. cit., p.23.

(22) Prefatory Note to DD, p.140.

made available for all and is 'within the reach of fulfilment by all men' (23).

The conception with which Owen takes issue may be illustrated from Joseph Bellamy of New England, who replies to the kind of objection advanced by Owen in typically Amyraldian fashion:

Objection 1: If Christ has suffered the penalty of the law, not only for the elect, but also for the non-elect, how can it be just, that they themselves should be made to suffer it over again for ever in hell?

Answer: Because Christ did not die with a design to release them from their deserved punishment, but only upon condition of faith. And so they have no right to the release, but upon that condition....And it is just, too, they should have an aggravated damnation, for refusing to return to God, despising the offers of mercy, and neglecting so great salvation, John 3: 16-19. (24)

Now Owen does not object to the language of conditions as such. What he rejects is the notion of a fulfilment of the condition independently of the grace procured by Christ. In his aristotelian view, both the 'end' of the atonement and the 'means' for attainment of the 'end' are obtained by Christ. A necessary connection exists between the one and the other:

The ground and cause of this is the appointment of the Lord that there should be such a connection and coherence between the things purchased for us by Jesus Christ, that the one should be a means and way of attaining the other - the one the condition, and the other the thing promised upon that condition, but both equally and alike procured for us by Jesus Christ; for if either be omitted in his purchase, the other would be vain and fruitless.... (25)

(23) See F. J. Powicke, The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross, pp.233f; and article on Amyraldianism, by R. Nichole, Encyclopaedia of Christianity, (ed. Palmer) (1964).

(24) True Religion Delineated (1750), (1788 ed.), p.318.

(25) DD, p.202.



In other words, although faith is the condition of salvation, both salvation itself and the ability to fulfil the condition are purchased by Christ for the elect. In which case, a conditional salvation for all must of necessity imply the eventual salvation of all.

Owen refutes the idea of an independent ability in man to respond to the gospel. In his view, the universalist case amounts to this:

God intendeth that (Christ) shall die for all, to procure for them remission of sins, reconciliation with him, eternal redemption and glory; but yet so that they shall never have the least good by these glorious things, unless they perform that which he knows they are in no way able to do, and which none but himself can enable them to perform, and which concerning far the greatest part of them he is resolved not to do. (26)

This is why Owen rejects the 'conditional system'. Grace to perform the conditions of salvation has been procured only for those for whom salvation itself was intended. Therefore, Christ did not die for all, since they do not in fact perform the conditions.

It is certain that Wesley did not grasp the implications of Owen's type of argument. It certainly received his attention when he was asked to comment on a tract published in Bristol in 1758. The author, like Owen before him, argued that 'the gospel is a revelation of grace and mercy, not a proposal of a covenant of terms and conditions.... The free grace of God applies to sinners

(26) Ibid, p.234. Notwithstanding the fact of God's secret purpose, a Calvinistic dualist would never deny so categorically as Owen does, that God is 'not resolved' to save all men. The New Testament is quite clear. '....God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved....'(I Timothy 2:4); 'The Lord is.... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' (II Peter 3:9).

the benefits of Christ's atonement and righteousness, by working in them repentance and faith' and that 'faith and repentance' are not 'works of man'. (27) Wesley emphatically agrees with Owen that faith and repentance are 'the free gifts of God' and that 'God works them in us'. However, he is still anxious to maintain that repentance and faith are conditions performed by the believer. Wesley's failure to grasp the crucial point appears when he answers the query, 'Can then God give that freely, which he does not give but upon certain terms and conditions?'

Doubtless he can; as one may freely give you a sum of money, on condition you stretch out your hand to receive it. It is therefore no 'contradiction to say, We are justified freely by grace, and yet upon certain terms or conditions.'(28)

Wesley's analogy is entirely inappropriate. The natural ability to stretch out the hand is quite independent of the sum of money offered. Owen's argument is that the ability to receive salvation as well as salvation itself, are both procured by Christ. The ability is part of the total donation of grace. Now Owen maintains that such ability is only granted to the elect. If Christ has died for all, then why are all not saved, if the ability to perform the conditions of salvation is granted to all? With reference to Wesley's analogy, Owen would argue that all but the elect are paralysed and unable to 'stretch out their hands' to grasp salvation. To be fair to Wesley, Owen's argument does sound more

(27) Letter to a Gentleman at Bristol, in Works, Vol. 10, p.297.

(28) Ibid, pp.297-8.

like an imposition of salvation than a gift freely given, whereas the language of scripture implies an equally free acceptance or rejection of the gift. (29)

If, as Owen's statement implies, there is a direct causal connection between the death of Christ and the actual removal of the state of unbelief in the elect, then his argument is sound. But if this was the form of the New Testament teaching on the subject, one would not expect to find those numerous references which attribute guilt to unbelievers on the basis of rejecting the gospel, or those exhortations to Christians to beware of the sin of unbelief (Hebrews 3:7f.). Owen's argument is surely calling into question human free agency. It is granted that this matter brings us to the ultimate dilemma of Christian theology, and one which all sides confess to be insoluble. It is therefore customary to say that the biblical theologian is committed to living with paradox. That said, the correct and most balanced evaluation of the paradox becomes a matter of supreme importance, both intellectually and practically. It would be wrong to accuse Owen of failing to solve the insoluble, but one may question the propriety of certain terminological usage. His quasi-necessitarian terminology is open to criticism. This hardly consists with his earlier denial of a view of grace which comes upon the will to 'subdue it by compulsion' (30). In other words, Owen cannot easily distinguish between the

(29) See Ephesians 2:8-10; John 6:32, etc. The phrase 'free grace' is not employed in the same way by our disputants. Wesley believes the grace of God to be free for all, whereas Owen uses the phrase to denote the freedom with which God bestows salvation according to his sovereign purpose. Confusion here sometimes clouds the debate.

(30) Dis. A., p.134. Owen prefers the term efficacious to irresistible, as we have already noted.

causation involved in the motion of inanimate objects and that involved in the bestowal of grace. That they are different, is a point of fundamental significance; Owen's argument implies that a man, to use Wesley's words, is no more 'than a tree or a stone'(31).

Such a view is unthinkable for Wesley:

What could God have done which he hath not done, to convince you that the day is coming, when he will fulfil his glorious promises? ....What, indeed, unless he had forced you to believe? And this he could not do, without destroying the nature which he had given you: for he made you free agents.... (32)

Owen would say that Wesley caricatures the Calvinist conception of grace. But arguing a necessary connection between the atonement and faith argues the very kind of overtones of irresistibility which Owen is at pains to avoid.

What then of Owen's view that by his sufferings, Christ has procured or purchased faith and grace for the elect alone? (33) Wesley's answer to this is, of course, his sermon entitled 'Free Grace'. 'Grace,' insists Wesley, 'is free in all, and free for all.' (34) However, it was Baxter who provided a more considered reply to Owen. After noting that the statement 'Christ died to purchase the act of faith for us' is 'no scripture-phrase so far as I know', Baxter puts the issue in a more satisfactory light:

It must be considered that Christ did not die to purchase faith as immediately, and on the same account, as to satisfy for sin, and purchase us impunity or redemption. The proper

(31) On Divine Providence, Works, Vol. 6, p.299.

(32) The Signs of the Times, Ibid, p.293.

(33) DD, pp.202-3.

(34) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 7, p.357.

direct reason of his sufferings, was to demonstrate the justice of God against sin....and thereby to procure pardon. We may well conceive Christ promising to the Father, as it were, (I will suffer for sinners, that they may not suffer) But you will hardly describe his undertaking thus, (I will die, if thou wilt give men faith) or (I will give thee so much of my blood for so much faith.) (35)

However, Baxter does not deny that faith is rooted in the atonement:

But because he knew that without grace no man would believe and accept his gift, therefore he whose sufferings were primarily satisfaction for sin, were secondarily meritorious of the means to bring men to the intended end; that is, of the Word and Spirit, by which Christ causeth sinners to believe: so that faith is a fruit of the death of Christ in a remoter secondary sense. (36)

It is evident from Baxter's argument that the means of grace as a whole are the fruit of the atonement. The donation of grace is much broader than the eventual reception of efficacious grace by the elect. In short, we are back to the distinction between common and special grace. We have also noted in the last chapter that Owen himself, quite contrary to his thesis in the Death of Death, accepts a similar distinction elsewhere in his writings. We also suggested that Owen must either reject his notion of common grace, or adopt a position on the atonement barely distinguishable from Baxter's. This dilemma has important implications for Owen's account of the 'conditional system'. As we have seen, Owen rejects the conditional system for two reasons:

1. Grace is only procured through the atonement for the elect.

(35) CT, Bk. 2, p.69.

(36) Ibid, p.69.

2. Apart from this efficacious grace, the natural man is incapable of fulfilling the conditions of the gospel.

The questions we must now ask are: How does Owen's account of common grace affect his rejection of the conditional system? How incapable is the unbeliever in fulfilling gospel conditions? The stress of Owen's thesis is that it is inconsistent and contradictory to expect the natural man to perform the conditions of the gospel. Grace cannot be offered on certain conditions when grace alone makes the fulfillment of the conditions possible. To offer grace in this manner must imply a natural ability as distinct from the ability which comes through grace. It was this consideration that led John Gill and his hypercalvinist associates of the eighteenth century to reject the very notion of offers of grace. (37) As we noted in the previous chapter, Gill was more consistent than Owen who still employed the language of the gospel offer (38). It was also observed that Owen's teaching in the Death of Death is at variance with his teaching about common grace, elsewhere in his writings. It is clear then that when Owen speaks of grace according to his major thesis he means special or efficacious grace. The inferences he draws from this teaching undoubtedly conflict with what he says elsewhere. In that remarkable statement quoted in the previous chapter, we saw Owen arguing that when 'common' influences of the Holy Spirit do not bring someone to Christ, it

- (37) Joseph Hussey (1659-1726) expounded this view in his God's Operations of Grace but No Offers of Grace (1707). Hussey's views in turn influenced Gill. See M. R. Watts, *op. cit.*, p.457, G. F. Nuttall, Cambridge Nonconformity 1660-1710: from Holcroft to Hussey in URC, Vol. 1, No. 9 (1977), pp.241-258; P. Toon, Hypercalvinism, Chapter 4.
- (38) DD, p.300. Owen does not seem at ease with the idea, however. He distorts language in speaking of the gospel offer as that 'from which everyman may conclude his own duty'. It is surely more correct to say that the divine commands relate to the concept of duty, whereas the gospel offer indicates God's provision and His willingness to save.

is because 'they do not sincerely improve what they have received'. Full conversion is prevented 'not merely for want of strength to proceed, but, by a free act of their own wills, they refuse the grace which is farther tendered unto them in the gospel'. (39)

Under the influences of the means of grace, it is obvious that someone who is not actually converted through efficacious grace is not incapable of 'proceeding' to fulfil the conditions of repentance and faith. There is no 'want of strength'. The issue is not one of inability, but of wilfulness and stubbornness. In short, if Owen admits 'common grace' into his overall scheme, he cannot consistently reject the conditional system. Then, without calling into question his view of 'sovereign grace', he can answer Wesley's charge that to punish the unbeliever without granting him some grace to repent is unjust. Owen's wider scheme therefore is a vastly different proposition from his thesis in the Death of Death. Indeed, the broader view not only demands that the gospel should be presented as a conditional offer of salvation, but it also makes more sense of those numerous biblical texts which imply such a presentation. It is not therefore inconsistent to say that the atonement procures a wider provision of grace than Owen allows in his narrower thesis. As we also noted earlier, the only consistent alternatives for Owen are either to adopt the hypercalvinism of Gill

(39) DD, p.236. (emphasis mine)

or the moderate Calvinism of Baxter. His own theology of atonement and grace - viewed as a whole - is beset with a serious inconsistency.

The criticism which has been made of Owen in relation to the conditionality of the gospel also applies to his conception of the covenant of grace. Owen teaches that the covenant 'was not made universally with all, but particularly only with some'. (40) The covenant is not a conditional contract between God and men, but it consists of benefits 'absolutely promised' to the elect alone. Owen argues his case by saying that 'the old covenant of works' did require the fulfilling of its conditions by men, but that now 'the new one of grace' consists of God promising to 'effect' in the elect the requirements of the covenant. Owen bases his arguments on two key biblical passages: Jeremiah 31:31f 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel....' and Hebrews 8:9-11 '....I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts....' The argument runs thus: God only performs these things in the elect, therefore the covenant is only made with them, not conditionally, but absolutely.

It is doubtful whether Owen's exegesis is sound here, and Baxter himself contests it. The passages in question seem to be more a declaration of intent on God's part, than a statement on

(40) DD, p.236.



the terms of the covenant. Baxter even admits 'Predestination is well proved from the text.' (41) The view of the gospel as a conditional offer of salvation to mankind generally rather than the Jews in particular, is in no way threatened by the passages in question. However, Owen is adamant: '....for who dares affirm that God entered into a covenant of grace with the seed of the serpent?' (42) Owen is alluding to Genesis 3:15 (43), usually regarded as the earliest biblical prophecy of redemption. Baxter evidently finds no difficulties with the text.

If by the serpent's seed, you mean such as are God's enemies, no doubt but Christ died for them, Romans 5:1-12 (44). If by the serpent's seed, you mean reprobates as such, you can never prove it to be the meaning of the text. If you mean foreseen final enemies and unbelievers, Christ died not for them as such, but as in their antecedent, recoverable, pardonable sin and misery. (45)

Owen cannot therefore make good his view of an 'absolute covenant' because he cannot successfully invalidate the conditional system. It is evident that Owen rejected the 'conditional system' as simply an Amyraldian variation on the Arminian thesis. In other words, Baxter's moderate Calvinism was viewed as a subtle attempt at synthesising 'free will' with 'free grace'. As we have seen, Baxter was anxious to show that as high-Calvinism was not all right, so Arminianism was not all wrong. On biblical grounds, Baxter was convinced that truth demanded the via media. Berkhof's qualification

(41) CT, Bk. 1, Part 3, p.56.

(42) DD, p.238.

(43) 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; ....'

(44) Romans 5:10 '....when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son....'

(45) CT, Bk. 2, p.72.

that his conception of 'common grace should be carefully distinguished from that of the Arminians' who make it part of the process of salvation (46), raises an interesting point in connection with Owen's theology. Since Owen believes that common grace does have 'a tendency unto sincere conversion' (47), he clearly regards it as a link in the ordo salutis. It has therefore a soteriological aspect. From Berkhof's standpoint, Owen would have to be included along with Baxter as one who concedes too much to Arminianism. It is obvious that this poses a dilemma for Owen in the light of his thesis in the Death of Death. However, it is equally interesting to note a rather similar dilemma facing Wesley.

We have already noted Wesley's impatience with the Calvinist conception of common grace. A species of grace which, by its limited efficacy, does not actually save, is, in Wesley's view, not worthy of the name 'grace'. Grace must, by its very nature be efficacious. Such a definition involved Wesley in difficulties since he wished to maintain that grace is for all. 'Why then are not all saved?' is a perfectly legitimate question. Albeit with a different emphasis, there is evidence that Wesley, like Owen, felt obliged to admit a distinction in his theology of grace. The following quotation reveals a hint of the distinction to which we refer:

One of Mr. Fletcher's Checks (48) considers at large the Calvinistic supposition 'that a natural man is as dead

(46) Op. cit., p.437.

(47) DD, p.236.

(48) See John Fletcher's Checks to Antinomianism (1771-1775).

as a stone'; and shows the utter falseness and absurdity of it; seeing no man living is without some preventing grace, and every degree of grace is a degree of life. (49)

Wesley's notion of preventing grace correlates with his other assertion that, whilst natural free will is a fiction in the case of fallen man, yet 'there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man' (50). Indeed, it is arguable that preventing grace is the explanation of this restoration of free-will. As such, the unbeliever does possess an ability to respond to the calls of the gospel. The next quotation bears a fascinating resemblance to the distinction between common and special grace used by both Baxter and Owen:

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life; some degree of salvation; ....Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation; whereby 'through grace', we 'are saved by faith'; consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. (51)

This is in direct conflict with Wesley's earlier (1741) portrayal of common grace as 'damning grace'. He obviously refuses to pretend that preventing grace is sufficient for salvation, but, like Baxter and Owen's common grace, it has 'some tendency toward life'.

A dualistic scheme of grace is further reflected in Wesley's

(49) Letter to John Mason, Works, Vol. 12, p.423. (emphasis mine)

(50) PCC, p.221.

(51) Working Out our own Salvation, Works, Vol. 6, p.482. Wesley obviously uses the phrase 'preventing grace' in the strictly theological sense of 'going before' and not in the sense of 'restraint' as implied by Tuttle, op. cit., p.301. Tillotson uses 'preventing grace' in Wesley's sense, see The Necessity of Supernatural Grace in order to a Christian Life in Till. II, p.320.

sermon on Predestination:

God....calls both outwardly and inwardly, - outwardly by the word of his grace, and inwardly by his Spirit. This inward application of his word to the heart seems to be what some term 'effectual calling' .... (52)

It becomes apparent, especially in his use of Calvinistic terminology, that Wesley has stepped outside the strictly Arminian doctrine of grace. In other words, if even Owen's Calvinism possesses a mildly Arminian flavour, Wesley's Arminianism is tinged with Calvinism. Packer is right to remark that 'Wesley's teaching included so much Reformation truth about the nature of faith, the witness of the Spirit, and effectual calling. Wesley's Arminianism, we might say, contained a good deal of its own antidote.' (53)

It is more than likely that Wesley's doctrine of grace was influenced by Baxter, whose Aphorismes of Justification (1649) was studied at the 1745 Methodist Conference (54). Further evidence that Wesley was, at this period, open to Calvinistic influences, is contained in a remarkable memorandum entitled 'Calvinistic Controversy' (55), probably penned about the same time, but with particular reference to the controversy with Whitefield(56). The introduction puts the document into context:

Having found for some time a strong desire to unite with Mr. Whitefield, as far as possible, to cut off needless dispute, I wrote down my sentiments, as plain as I could:- There are three points in debate: 1. Unconditional election. 2. Irresistible grace. 3. Final Perseverance.

(52) Works, Vol. 6, p.213.

(53) Arminianisms, in The Manifold Grace of God, Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference (1968), p.32.

(54) See Works, Vol. 8, p.271.

(55) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 13, p.478. Tyerman believes the document was written in 1743 (op. cit., Vol. 1, p.349).

(56) See A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley in answer to his sermon entitled 'Free Grace', App.II in Whitefield's Journal (ed. I. Murray, 1960), p.563f. See also A. Dallimore, George Whitefield, Vol. 2 (1980), p.27f.

After stating his belief that God has chosen certain nations to 'peculiar privileges' and certain persons to 'peculiar advantages', Wesley then makes an incredible admission:

And I do not deny, (though I cannot prove it is so,) That he has unconditionally elected some persons, thence eminently styled 'the elect', to eternal glory.

Equally remarkable are Wesley's thoughts on irresistible grace:

....I believe That the grace which brings faith, and thereby salvation, into the soul, is irresistible at that moment.

And that:

....in those eminently styled 'the elect' (if such there be) the grace of God is so far irresistible, that they cannot but believe, and be finally saved.

Furthermore, as regards perseverance, Wesley believes:

That there is a state attainable in this life, from which a man cannot finally fall,

And that:

All those eminently styled 'the elect' will infallibly persevere to the end.

These unequivocally Calvinistic statements are tempered by Wesley's denials that those not elected must perish everlastingly and that those must be damned in whom the grace of God does not work irresistibly.

Of possibly greater importance, Wesley was not prepared to countenance the doctrine of limited atonement, one of Whitefield's

views not dealt with in the document. In this respect, it was a position more akin to Baxter's moderate Calvinism than to Whitefield's high Calvinism that Wesley seems willing to consider. His sympathy for such a position appears genuine, for at the 1745 Methodist Conference, it was admitted that 'the truth of the Gospel' lies 'very near' to Calvinism:

Wherein may we come to the very edge of Calvinism?

- (1) In ascribing all good to the free grace of God.
- (2) In denying all natural free will, and all power antecedent to grace, and
- (3) In excluding all merit from man; even for what he has or does by the grace of God. (57)

However 'Calvinistic' Wesley's sentiments might have been at this period, it was but a passing phase. By the year 1752, when Predestination Calmly Considered was published (58), the views for which Wesley is famous had become settled convictions. The fact however remains that Wesley continued to draw a distinction between 'preventing' and 'saving' grace (even as late as 1776), proving an interesting parallel to the distinction made by Baxter and Owen. As such, Wesley's distinction helped to solve his dilemma. If all did not, in the event, partake of 'saving grace', none were without 'preventing grace'. This was a theology of grace which was at once realistic (all would not be saved) and evangelistic

(57) Works, Vol. 8, p.274.

(58) Tyerman, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.148.

(all may be saved).

Although it is true that Wesley, unlike Baxter, later refused to see any possible consistency in maintaining unconditional election and conditional reprobation (59), it is surely arguable that had he not been acquainted with the high-Calvinism of Whitefield (and later of Toplady) and the hypercalvinism of Gill, he might not have rejected the moderately Calvinistic influences of the 1740's so decisively. Wesley's aversion to Whitefield's doctrine of limited atonement (60), probably turned the scales. Thereafter, Wesley could not tolerate ideas which, in his view, paralysed the work of evangelism. However, there is plenty of evidence that Wesley continued to live 'on the very edge of Calvinism' in preaching the view of grace outlined at the 1745 Conference.

It is surely significant that all the theologians in our discussion have resorted to some dualistic conception of grace. It cannot have escaped their notice that the New Testament writers never actually discuss grace in this way. The reason for this is clear. Dr. Guthrie writes that, in the New Testament there is 'no formal discussion of the problem of reconciling God's

(59) See Tyerman's comments, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.148 and Semmel, op. cit., p.54.

(60) Whitefield's precise position is not without some ambiguity. Dallimore is persuaded that he held to particular redemption (op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.25-26), and many of Whitefield's statements lend weight to this opinion. Whitefield says, 'O blessed be God for his rich grace, his distinguishing, sovereign, electing love....he knows everyone for whom he died.' Select Sermons of George Whitefield (1959), p.115. Owen is more extreme in his statements than this one, which is not accompanied by a strong negative statement. Baxter would not dissent from Whitefield's view as it stands, and we know that Whitefield greatly admired Richard Baxter. After visiting Kidderminster in 1743, Whitefield wrote, 'I was greatly refreshed to find what a sweet savour of good Mr. Baxter's doctrine, works and discipline remained to this day.' Works, ed. Gillies (1771), Vol. 2, p.47.

sovereignty with man's free-will' (61). Once such a discussion is embarked upon, it seems that a dualistic understanding of grace is necessary to maintain a coherent theology of grace. As the use of such an extra-biblical term as the 'trinity' has not been regarded as inimical to a coherent biblical theology of that subject, so the use of such adjectives as 'common', 'special', etc., cannot be justly objected to, as long as they are defined within the thought-patterns of the biblical writers. It is surely this realisation that prompts Berkhof to write that 'There are no two kinds of grace in God, but only one,' yet this 'one grace manifests itself....in different operations and gifts' (62).

By way of conclusion, it is perfectly clear that neither Owen nor Wesley could solve their theological dilemmas without resorting to some dualistic view of grace. In so doing, Baxter's via media is, in principle, vindicated. (63) His scheme embraces the leading emphases of both Owen and Wesley, whilst at the same time it exposes their respective weaknesses. When all is said and done, the disputants are closer in sympathy than their more extreme theories might indicate. They both believe that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are biblical truths. Their respective accounts

(61) New Testament Theology (1981), p.640.

(62) Systematic Theology (1963), p.435.

(63) Richard Watson's criticism of Baxter's dualistic view of grace (i.e. 'No man is actually saved without something more than this 'sufficient grace' provides.' Op. cit., p.421.) must be levelled against his master Wesley. Even Wesley did not argue that 'common preventing grace' actually saves, without 'saving grace' proper. Contrary to what Watson says, Baxter argues that 'no man is denied power to believe savingly, but for not using as he could his antecedent commoner grace.' (CT, Bk. 2. p.131.) Such 'non-use' is alone evidence of non-election to salvation. Watson argues that the unconverted have 'a sufficient degree' of grace to enable them to 'embrace the Gospel', plus a power to either 'use or spurn this heavenly gift and gracious assistance.' Op. cit., Vol. 2, p.377. Baxter rightly asks, 'Do you mean that man's will is more powerful than God's?' Op. cit., p.145. What ensures that such a 'power' for which



claim to provide a 'balanced' evaluation of the paradox. However, at the point where the grace of God brings a hearer of the gospel to the point of conversion, Owen and Wesley give a different answer to the question 'What is the decisive influence in acceptance or rejection?' Owen answers, 'The will of God.' Wesley's answer is, 'The will of man.' Yet both wish to attribute the salvation of the sinner to the grace of God, or his damnation to his own self-will. The glory for the one is God's; the blame for the other is man's. There can be no doubt that this is the biblical picture, and it is arguable that Baxter has more success in dealing with the issues than either Owen or Wesley, whose overall theories tend to gravitate towards Baxter's account.

At the risk of oversimplifying a subject involving an enormous degree of difficulty, one may advance the following analogy. Considering the usual walking motion of a human being, it would be foolish to ask 'What guarantees the ability to walk, the brain or the limbs?' One can imagine two disputants foolishly contesting for the one or the other. The answer is 'Both'. In other words, the answer to the question posed earlier ('What is the decisive influence, man's will or God's will?') must be 'Neither separately, but both simultaneously.' (64) It was this kind of solution to the paradox that Baxter was attempting to provide.

(63) continued/ Watson pleads will not render the work of Christ entirely fruitless? Baxter argues that election alone guarantees the success of the atonement, as we have seen earlier.

(64) In his Treatise Concerning Grace and Freewill (c.1128), Bernard of Clairvaux gives his solution to the insoluble dilemma: 'Take away free will, and there remaineth nothing to be saved, take away grace and there is no means whereby it can be saved....Salvation is given by God alone, and it is given only to free-will: even as it cannot be wrought without the consent of the receiver it cannot be wrought without the grace of the giver.' Quoted from the translation by Watkin Williams (1920), given in Anne Freemantle, The Age of Belief (1962 rep.), p.102.

4: The Nature of the Atonement.

This chapter will be primarily concerned with Owen's thought, since, by his own admission, Wesley refused to theorise or speculate about the nature of the atonement. However, Wesley's very claim demands investigation, and an attempt will be made to ascertain his thinking upon the subject in due course. In keeping with the stated method of this study, reference will be made to Richard Baxter whose theology represents the 'middle ground' in the debate. Archbishop Tillotson, our other 'middle-way' theologian is not especially relevant at this stage, since his theology of the atonement is not of particular significance.

Any theory regarding the extent of the atonement necessarily assumes a theory of the nature of the atonement itself. Although formal discussion of the subject has usually distinguished between the atonement and its extent, Calvinistic theologians have been concerned to point out that the former cannot really be understood in isolation from the latter. In short, questions about the one are necessarily involved in discussion of the other. In the view of Calvinistic divines, a theology of the atonement is, by definition, a theology of a limited atonement (1). The very terms of the discussion possess a restricted character (2). This was an

(1) See Gary D. Long, Definite Atonement (1977), p.40.

(2) 'The saving efficacy of expiation, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption is too deeply embedded in these concepts, and we dare not eliminate this efficacy.' John Murray, Redemption, Accomplished and Applied (1961), p.64.

axiomatic consideration in John Owen's exposition of the subject before us.

The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order (1658) is not only a specimen of puritan theology. It also provides us with a summary of John Owen's theology, since he was involved in drawing it up (3). Chapters VIII and XI of the confession provide statements on the subject of the atonement, in which the nature and extent of the atonement are clearly seen as inseparable elements:

The Lord Jesus by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the Justice of God, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him. (Chapter VIII, Of Christ the Mediator) (4)

Christ by his obedience and Death did fully discharge the Debt of all those that are justified, and did by the sacrifice of himself, in the blood of his Cross, undergoing in their stead the penalty due unto them make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's Justice in their behalf; .... (Chapter XI, Of Justification) (5)

As well as giving us a summary of Owen's theology of the atonement, these extracts also reveal the progress of thought on the subject, originating with Anselm's 'satisfaction theory', and successively developed at the hands of Bernard, Aquinas and the Protestant Reformers. (6) What is also evident in the Savoy Declaration (7) is the total absence of the dualistic conception of the atonement taught by the Reformers. As has been demonstrated

- (3) Owen was a member of the committee appointed to prepare the draft of the Savoy Declaration. See Peter Toon, God's Statesman (1971), p.104.
- (4) Op. cit., ed. A. G. Matthews (1959), p.87.
- (5) Ibid, p.90.
- (6) See R. A. Finlayson, The Story of Theology (1963), p.34f. Systematic Theologies by Charles Hodge (1960 rep.), A. H. Strong (1890), Berkhof (1958 ed.) and Tillich (1957) provide discussions of theories of the atonement. See also R. W. Dale, The Atonement (1905 ed.), pp.327f.

in chapter one, the Reformers spoke of a sufficient provision in the atonement for all men, whilst affirming its effectual reception by the elect alone. In this respect, the puritan doctrine marks a departure from Reformation Calvinism, thus justifying the description of the later theology as 'High Calvinism'.

In the Death of Death, Owen attempts to demonstrate the particularism of his theology of the atonement by examining the key theological terms involved, viz 'redemption', 'reconciliation', 'satisfaction', etc. In the course of examining Owen's argument, we will, in passing, compare his conclusions with the views of John Calvin, and other more recent theologians before making the main comparison between Owen and Wesley's positions on the atonement.

Owen does not hesitate to point out that the very idea of 'universal redemption' involves a contradiction, 'irreconcilable in itself', if any 'die in captivity'. In other words, he draws attention to the parallel between Old Testament Israel and the spiritual conception of the church in the New Testament:

I hope it need not be proved that that people, as delivered from bondage, preserved, taken nigh unto God, brought into Canaan, was typical of God's spiritual church, of elect believers....And, in truth, it is the most senseless thing in the world, to imagine that the Jews were under a type to all the whole world, or indeed to any but God's chosen ones.... (8)

Although there is an obvious parallel in Scripture between

(7) The same can be said of the Westminster Confession (1646) and the London Confession (Baptist), (1689).

(8) DD, p.258.

redeemed Israel and the redeemed church (Galatians 6:16), the evidence cited by Owen can sustain an alternative interpretation. The very fact that not all those who actually left Egypt reached the land of Canaan demands a dualistic view of the nation's temporal deliverance. As a result of complaint and unbelief, a significant proportion of the nation died in the wilderness (Numbers 14:28-37). Throughout Israel's long history, disobedience brought destruction and exile. However, there was always a remnant. If Owen wishes to apply the analogy in question, he must take account of these facts. The general temporal redemption was not 'efficacious' throughout the nation. Owen can only argue that Israel was a type of the 'visible' church. This would imply that Israel's remnant was a type of the 'invisible' church of the elect people of God. However Owen insists that the nation as a whole typified the 'spiritual church of elect believers'. Had he argued that the 'visible' church was the antitype, he would have been committed to a dualistic view of redemption, comprehending the two aspects of the church, if not the world.

In addition to the typological relationship between Israel and the church, there is also the fact of the spiritual continuity of the Covenant. Those spiritual blessings promised to Old Testament Israel became the privileges of 'all nations' (Matthew 28:19; Romans 9:24) under the New Testament. Therefore it is quite consistent

to argue that the spiritual principles once applying to Israel, now apply to the world. As there was a spiritual elect within Israel (Romans 9:6; 11:5), so the elect are now to be gathered from all nations. Contrary to Owen's view, Israel may be viewed as a microcosm of the world, rather than the elect.

Viewing Christ's death as the antitype of Israel's temporal redemption, Owen says that 'Redemption, which in the Scripture is lutrosis sometimes, but most frequently apolutrosis, is the delivery of any one from captivity and misery by the intervention of lutron, of a price or ransom.' (9) Invoking his version of the Old Testament model, Owen insists that redemption 'cannot possibly be conceived to be universal unless all be saved' (10). However, the alternative interpretation of the Old Testament evidence can arguably sustain a dualistic view of the atonement. Christ paid a lutron sufficient for all, but efficient only for the elect. In which case, Owen's objection to a universal dimension in the atonement possesses little weight. Owen's view would find no sympathy with Calvin. In the reformer's view, 'redemption' has a wider reference than the actual salvation of the elect. In his comment on Paul's words in Colossians 1:14, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood', Calvin writes:

First, he says that we have redemption, and immediately explains it as the remission of sins.... He says that this

(9) Ibid, p.259.

(10) Ibid, p.261.

redemption was procured by the blood of Christ, for by the sacrifice of His death all the sins of the world have been expiated. (11)

Paul's statement in I Timothy 2:6, that Christ 'gave himself a ransom for all', antilutron huper panton, receives a predictable exegesis from Owen: in using such an indeterminate statement, Paul only means 'all kinds of men, rather than all men individually'.

This text will, along with others, receive detailed attention in the next chapter. However, it is arguable to suggest here that there is that kind of ambiguity in the New Testament conception of redemption which Baxter, in common with Calvin, detects in patristic usage:

As for Augustine and some Protestants, they oft deny that Christ redeemeth any but the faithful, because the word redemption is ambiguous, and sometimes taken for the price or ransom paid, and often for the very liberation of the captive sinner. And whenever Austin denieth common redemption, he taketh redemption in this last sense, for actual deliverance. But he asserteth it in the first sense, that Christ died for all. Yea, he thought his death is actually applied to the true justification and sanctification of some reprobates that fall away and perish, though the elect only are so redeemed as to be saved. Read yourself Augustine, Prosper and Fulgentius, and you will see this with your own eyes. (12)

Unless such an ambiguity is admitted, one will be unable to avoid the kind of strained exegesis which Owen and others engage in. It is suggested that, on balance, a dualistic conception of redemption makes more coherent sense of both the parallel between Israel

(11) Comment, Colossians 1:14. See also Comment, II Peter 2:1.

(12) CT, Bk. 2, pp.57-58.

and the church, and the type of universalist statements frequently found in the New Testament.

Owen treats the biblical concept of reconciliation in a predictably restricted manner:

That distinction of some between the reconciliation of God to man, making that to be universal towards all, and the reconciliation of man to God, making that to be only of a small number of those to whom God is reconciled, is a no less monstrous figment. Mutual alienation must have mutual reconciliation, seeing they are correlata. (13)

Since Owen argues that a strict correlation exists between God as reconciler and the elect as reconciled, he can only understand Paul's use of kosmos in II Corinthians 5:19 (God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself) as meaning the elect (14). It is a fact of some significance that Calvin does not adopt Owen's definition of reconciliation, nor does he expound Paul's statement in Owen's exclusivist manner. On the former point, Calvin rejects the notion of correlata:

Although Christ's coming had its source in the overflowing love of God for us, yet, until men know that God has been propitiated by a mediator, there cannot but be on their side a separation which prevents them from having access to God. (15)

It is an inescapable fact that Calvin, unlike his professed disciples, seems unfettered by dubious theory when he is expounding scripture. Even though some might question his dualistic scheme of the extent of the atonement, this never seems to leave the reader

(13) Op. cit., pp.262-263. Leon Morris contests the idea that the Greek katallage and English reconciliation have identical meanings. There is more 'one sidedness' in the Greek, allowing the distinction between reconciliation offered and reconciliation consummated. See The Apostolic Preaching on the Cross (1960 ed.), p.200.

(14) DD, p.305.

(15) Comment, II Corinthians 5:19.



with the feeling that Calvin is imposing a strained exegesis upon the text. As such, his comments possess a compelling simplicity compared with Owen's. At least the phraseology of Scripture is largely left intact:

It is incontestable that Christ came for the expiation of the sins of the whole world....Though reconciliation is offered to all through Him, yet the benefit is peculiar to the elect....God reconciles the world to Himself, reaches to all, but that it is not sealed indiscriminately on the hearts of all to whom it comes so as to be effectual. (16)

Calvin's position is clear. God is reconcilable (17) to all, even if, in the event, all are not actually reconciled. Since the doctrine of reconciliation is to be placed in the wider context of grace, and grace itself is both common and special - a view which Owen shares with Baxter, the evidence arguably demands the following deductions:

1. God is reconcilable to all. (18)
2. Reconciliation is conditionally offered to all. (19)
3. Reconciliation is actually enjoyed by the elect.

Owen's discussion of 'reconciliation' offers no tenable alternative which does not involve a strained exegesis of the relevant New Testament statements. It has also been observed in a previous chapter that Owen is involved in a serious contradiction with regard to his particularist thesis in the Death of Death. To

(16) Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, pp.148-9.

(17) In the view of the New England divine, Joseph Bellamy, this was precisely what the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22) was teaching. God is willing to be reconciled to far more than are actually reconciled. Commenting on the words 'All things are now ready (Matthew 22:4), Bellamy says: 'What Christ has done is in fact sufficient, to open a door for God through him to become reconcilable to the whole world.' True Religion Delineated, p.308.

(18) The work of reconciliation, in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished, before the gospel is preached. J. Denney, The Death of Christ (1951), p.85.

be consistent, Owen must either reject the notion of common grace in favour of his particularism, or he must incorporate a dualistic element into his view of the atonement. More recent theologians have advanced solutions exhibiting many similarities with the position advocated by Calvin and Baxter.

R. W. Dale (1829-1895), whilst no longer at ease with the Calvinism of an older generation, still expounded the subject of the atonement with respectful reference to John Calvin. Dale wrote that 'The six chapters of Calvin's Institutes, in which he discusses the doctrine of Redemption, deserve very careful consideration.' (20) Dale's dualistic treatment of the subject, although inconsistent with later Calvinism, points in the same direction as the reformer's view. Dale wrote that there was 'a wonderful solidarity' between Christ 'and the human race' (21), and that 'the language of the New Testament seems to imply that in some sense Christ died in the name of the human race.' (22) However, whilst Dale regarded it to be the 'complete truth' that Christ's death was 'a propitiation for the sins of men' and that he suffered 'on behalf of mankind', the efficacy of the atonement is restricted,

(19) 'It is possible to use the Greek terms to denote the fact that God has dealt with the obstacle of fellowship, and that he now proffers reconciliation to man.' L. Morris, op. cit., p.200.

(20) The Atonement, p.352. A leading Victorian Congregationalist, Dale (See DNB supplement) was ostensibly in the tradition of Owen. His early inclinations are interestingly portrayed in Dale A. Johnson, Anticipations of the Future: some early letters of R. W. Dale, URC, Vol. 1, No. 2, (November, 1973), p.56f. See S. J. Mikolaski, The Theology of R. W. Dale, EQ, July, 1962, pp.131-143 and R. W. Dale on the Atonement, EQ, January, 1963, pp.23-29. This author traces Dale's disenchantment with traditional Calvinism. See also Stephen H. Mayor, R. W. Dale and Nineteenth Century Thought, TCHS, Vol. XX, No. 1, May (1965), pp.4f and E. A. Payne, The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England (1944), pp.108f.

(21) Christian Doctrine (1894), p.265.

(22) The Atonement, p.458.

since it secured the destruction of sin in all who through faith are restored to union with Christ. (23)

Despite Dale's reference to Calvin, there is little, if any, reference to divine election. In this respect, Karl Barth's exposition of the atonement is decidedly more satisfactory. Although Barth entertains a conception of election somewhat different from Calvin (24) - indeed, it seems to agree with neither Augustinian Calvinism nor classical Arminianism, yet he adopts a dualistic scheme not dissimilar to Calvin's. Barth writes that Christ 'was elected the Head of all humanity (as the last and true Adam, I Corinthians 15:45f), that He was made the one Mediator between God and all men (I Timothy 2:5), that He died for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2)....' (25). However, Barth insists that the idea of the body of Christ is only used 'of the Christian community' where there is 'concrete fellowship with Him (I Corinthians 10:16)'. The 'community' consists of those who are 'members of this body, in Jesus Christ, in His election from all eternity (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4). And it became His body, they became its members, in the fulfilment of their eternal election in His death.' (26)

Owen's treatment of the atonement gives rise to another inconsistency. As was also noted in Chapter one, he does accept

(23) Ibid, pp.492-3. (emphasis mine)

(24) Church Dogmatics (1956), Vol. IV, p.516. 'In God's eternal counsel the election of rejected man did not take place without the rejection of elected man: the election of Jesus Christ as our Head and Representative, and therefore our election as those who are represented by Him.'

(25) Ibid, pp.664-5.

(26) Ibid, p.667. See also Cornelius Van Til, Karl Barth, in The Encyclopaedia of Christianity (1964), pp.573f. For a Barthian assessment of the issues, see J. B. Torrance, The Incarnation and 'Limited Atonement' in EQ, April, 1983, pp.83f; and Strengths and Weaknesses of Westminster Theology, in A. I. C. Heron (ed), The Westminster Confession in the Church Today (1982). T. F. Torrance, (ed), The School of Faith (1959).

the scholastic distinction that Christ's death was sufficient for all but efficient for the elect (27). However, Owen and the reformers attach rather different ideas to the distinction. Whilst Calvin and others interpret 'sufficient for all' as 'a sufficient ransom price for all', Owen employs a 'corrected' version which reads 'sufficient to have been made a price for all.' What Owen does is to eliminate from the concept of sufficiency the notion of actual redemptive provision. In other words, he abolishes the reformation concept of universal sufficiency altogether:

Its being a price for all or some doth not arise from its own sufficiency, worth, or dignity, but from the intention of God and Christ using it to that purpose, as was declared; and, therefore, it is denied that the blood of Christ was a sufficient price and ransom for all and every-one, not because it was not sufficient, because it was not a ransom. (28)

Owen therefore denies that the concept of lutron is an intrinsic feature of the death of Christ. It only 'becomes' a lutron in the purpose of God. This surely implies that the death of Christ, viewed as an event, entails no redemptive benefits for anyone, a conclusion very different from that intended by the reformers. (29) The difference can be stated simply: Owen is really

(27) It was, then, the purpose and intention of God that his Son should offer a sacrifice of infinite worth, value, and dignity, sufficient in itself for the redeeming of all and every man, if it had pleased the Lord to employ it to that purpose; yea, and of other worlds also if the Lord should freely make them, and would redeem them. Sufficient we say, then, was the sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of the whole world, and for the expiation of all the sins of all and every man in the world. Ibid, pp.295-6 (emphasis mine).

(28) Ibid, p.296 (emphasis mine). Sell fails to see this, op. cit., p.114. Owen's concept of 'sufficiency' approximates closely to William Perkins' high Calvinist view of 'potential efficacy'. Perkins goes on to say, 'If we consider that actual efficacy, the price is paid in the counsel of God, and as touching the event, only for those which are elected and predestinated.... Therefore the price is appointed and limited to the elect alone by the Father's decree.' A Treatise of Predestination, Works (1617), Vol. 2, p.609. Owen and Perkins follow Beza's definition of the sufficiency/efficiency formula. See Daniel, op. cit., p.520. See also Michael T. Malone, The Doctrine of

saying 'the atonement might have been sufficient for all', whereas the reformers stated that 'the atonement was sufficient for all'. Basic to Owen's view is the thought that there can be no ransom which is not accompanied by actual deliverance, but this has been dealt with in the discussion about 'redemption'.

Three points demand careful consideration here. Firstly, Owen evacuates the term 'sufficiency' of its real sense when he ascribes to it the idea of a potential or hypothetical sufficiency. The reformers taught an actual sufficiency or definite provision for all, and that such a provision possesses reality prior to its application to the elect. Indeed, Owen's exposition is entirely artificial, making the redemptive character of the death of Christ something external to it, when the converse is surely true. The concept of lutron is necessarily implied by 'sacrifice'. If then, as Owen concedes, the sacrifice of Christ is 'sufficient....for the redemption of the whole world' this can only mean that there is a sufficient lutron for the whole world, as understood by the reformers. When therefore Owen argues that the extent of the atonement is something external to the sacrifice, he is saying something very different from the reformers. (30) They argued that the universally

(28) continued/ Predestination in the Thought of William Perkins and Richard Hooker, ATR, Vol. LII, No. 2, April, 1970, pp.103-117.

(29) Baxter comments that 'When the schoolmen and our own divines say, that Christ died for all quoad sufficientiam pretii, but not quoad efficientiam; they cannot without absurdity be interpreted to mean, that his death is sufficient for all if it had been a price for them; and not a sufficient price for them; for that were to contradict themselves. Universal Redemption (1694), p.59.

(30) Baxter observes that 'Christ's death is a sufficient price and satisfaction to God for the sins of all mankind....but it effecteth actual remission, justification, adoption, salvation, only for believers. This is the plain truth, and the sense of Divines in saying, that Christ died for all quoad sufficientiam, non quoad efficientiam. UR, p.60.

sufficient redemptive character of Christ's sacrifice was an internal feature of it, and that its application was what was external to it. What is sufficient in Owen's mind has no redemptive status for anyone until it is invested accordingly in the divine purpose. For the reformers, Christ's sacrifice possesses universally adequate redemptive value before the question of a restricted application arises.

Secondly, part of what Owen insists is external to Christ's sacrifice should really be regarded as internal. This would then logically consist with his view that redemption is restricted in its intrinsic character. Since Owen teaches a limited and restricted sufficiency in Christ's ransom, he is surely involved in a contradiction in asserting, as he does (31), that the restricted application of the benefits of the atonement arises from considerations external to the sacrifice itself. Since Owen argues that Christ has only made satisfaction for the sins of the elect, then the restricted application of the atonement arises from internal considerations. This is the reason why Owen cannot employ the term 'sufficiency' with redemptive connotations. For him, the term carries no redemptive weight. On the other hand, the reformers taught a universally sufficient satisfaction. As such, they were not in the least inhibited in proclaiming sufficient resources of

(31) DD, p.296.

grace for all. Only by adopting the reformers' view can Owen logically assert that the restricted application of the atonement is external to the sacrifice itself. His theory of satisfaction forbids him from doing so.

Thirdly, Owen can only argue his position by placing a strained exegesis on the words of Paul, 'Christ Jesus....who gave himself a ransom for all (I Timothy 2:5,6). This and other biblical statements will be considered in a detailed way in the next chapter, but it may be said here that, from Owen's standpoint, the language of Paul must be loose and ill-defined, if the apostle intended to say that 'Christ....gave himself a ransom for the elect.'

In the course of considering the concept of satisfaction, as it relates to the death of Christ, Owen is at some pains to demonstrate that the satisfaction theory necessarily implies an atonement of limited extent. With regard to this point, Owen writes:

A third way whereby the death of Christ for sinners is expressed is SATISFACTION - namely, that by his death he made satisfaction to the justice of God for their sins for whom he died, that so they might go free. (32)

It is to be noted immediately that this statement, whilst being typical of puritan Calvinism, is very different from the reformers. Owen is very much aware that unlike the terms already discussed, viz, 'redemption' and 'reconciliation', 'the word satisfaction is not found in the Latin or English Bible applied to the death of

(32) Op. cit., p.265.

Christ.' (33) He insists, however, that there are 'other words in the original languages' which are equivalent in meaning. What Owen does therefore is to take up the Anselmic phraseology with all its 'commercial' implications, expounding it in his particularistic manner. Calvin and the other reformers, whilst not making any observation as to the extra-biblical origin of 'satisfaction' were content to use the term within the confines of biblical phraseology. Calvin expounds the idea of satisfaction in a universalist manner (34), as did the Anglican reformers (35).

Owen evidently employs the terminology in question in a strictly quantitative sense, when he states that:

Satisfaction is a term borrowed from the law, applied properly to things, thence translated and accomodated unto persons; and it is a full compensation of the creditor from the debtor....If I owe a man a hundred pounds, I am his debtor, by virtue of the bond wherein I am bound, until some such thing be done as recompenseth him, and moveth him to cancel the bond; which is called satisfaction. (36)

Owen demonstrates the validity of the commercial analogy by an appeal to those texts in which it is used, either directly or indirectly, e.g. the parable of the unmerciful servant ('....one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents' Matthew 18:24), and the Lord's prayer ('Forgive us our debts', Matthew 6:12), etc. Man, it is argued, is the debtor, sin is the debt, the obligation to pay is demanded by the law, God is the creditor, and the ransom

(33) Ibid, p.265.

(34) Calvin expounds the doctrine of satisfaction with reference to I John 2:2 and John 1:29. Our knowledge of his exposition of those two verses demands the view that Calvin taught a universal satisfaction for sin by Christ's death. See Institutes, III:4:26, and the comments on the biblical statements already cited.

(35) See Article XXXI of the XXXIX Articles.

(36) DD, p.265.



is paid to the offended party on behalf of the offender by Christ in his death. (Romans 3:25). Owen links the concept of 'satisfaction' with that of 'propitiation' (hilasmos) although he discusses the significance of this at a later stage in his argument. Thus far, Owen's case is plausible. Notwithstanding his different conception regarding the extent of the atonement, Calvin (37) would concur with Owen's general exegesis.

However, Owen 'over works' the analogy to establish his major thesis, that the satisfaction of Christ extends only to the sins of the elect, a view which Calvin would repudiate. Owen's rigorous logic challenges the position of those who argue for a general atonement viewed in terms of the commercial theory:

First, That the full and due debt of all those for whom Jesus Christ was responsible was fully paid in to God, according to the utmost extent of the obligation. Secondly, that the Lord, who is a just creditor, ought in all equity to cancel the bond, ....full payment being made unto him for the debt. Thirdly, That the debt thus paid was not for this or that sin, but all the sins of all those for whom and in whose name this payment was made.... (38)

Owen's position is clear: Christ's satisfaction was an exact and numerical equivalent to the spiritual debts of all the elect.(39) If he is correct, then he has every right to ask the following questions:

If the full debt of all be paid to the utmost extent of the obligation, how comes it to pass that so many are shut up

(37) Calvin says, 'To sins he gives the name of debts, because we owe the punishment due to them, a debt which we could not possibly pay were we not discharged by this remission, the result of his free mercy, when he freely expunges the debt....' Institutes, III:20:45.

(38) DD, pp.272-3.

(39) Barnes justly rejects Owen's 'commercial' reasoning. The atonement 'is not a commercial transaction - a matter of debt and payment, of profit and loss. It pertains to law, to government, to holiness, not to literal debt and payment. Sin is crime, not debt; it is guilt, not a failure in pecuniary obligation.' The Atonement (1860), p.230. (emphasis mine)

in prison to eternity, never freed from their debts? ....If the Lord, as a just creditor, ought to cancel all obligations and surcease all suits against such as have their debts so paid, whence is it that his wrath smokes against some to all eternity? ....How comes it that God never gives a discharge to innumerable souls, though their debts be paid? (40)

Wesley's antagonist, Augustus Toplady, deals with the same thought from the stand point of one assured of his election:

And will the righteous judge of men  
Condemn me for that debt of sin,  
Which, Lord, was charged on thee?

Payment God cannot twice demand,  
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,  
And then again at mine. (41)

Owen's statement is an example of the excessive use of metaphor. Truth is obscured rather than elucidated as a result. Sin is viewed in strict pecuniary terms, and hell equated with a debtor's prison. If such a strict equivalence is allowed, what are those in prison suffering for, if it is not for rejecting a free-offer of 'credit' provided for in the Gospel? Furthermore, the doctrine of common grace implies the 'availability of credit facilities' for all 'debtors'. (In this respect, commercial metaphors can be used to refute Owen's thesis.) Owen's statement also touches on the 'double-payment' idea, a notion shortly to be discussed at length.

Since Owen maintains the reality of common grace (in a manner not dissimilar to Calvin and Baxter), he cannot successfully invalidate the idea of conditional 'credit' or offers of grace. If he

(40) DD, p.273.

(41) Hymn XVI, of Later Hymns, in Diary and Selection of Hymns of Augustus Toplady (1969), p.193. Edward Polhill (1622-1694) rejected Owen's thesis, albeit unconvincingly in The Divine Will Considered in its Eternal Decrees (1673). The 'Double-payment' objection was employed by eighteenth century hyper-calvinists and in the nineteenth by William Rushton, A Defense of Particular Redemption (1831). See Daniel, op. cit. In the twentieth century, D. M. Lloyd-Jones has argued similarly (Reformation Today, ed. Hulse, No. 6, 1971), although he never preached the doctrine of limited atonement. Indeed Lloyd-Jones' early sermons suggest a belief in universal atonement. Evangelistic Sermons at Aberavon (1983), pp.87-88.

wishes to argue for his particularist thesis, then he must repudiate common grace. Since the case for common grace is not in dispute, then Owen's argument that none ought to suffer eternally if their debts have been discharged is questionable. Common grace implies a general satisfaction and a conditional discharge. Only those are discharged from their debts if they have received the conditional offers of pardon. Calvin and the reformers viewed the extent of Christ's satisfaction in the same universalist terms as they viewed the provision of grace. In short, a correlation obtains between satisfaction and grace. The reformers were thus more consistent than Owen, whose doctrine of satisfaction is invalidated by a broader conception of grace than his particularism logically allows.

There are further matters which demand attention as a result of Owen's commercial theory of the atonement, viz, the basis for the universal preaching of the gospel, and the warrant for those addressed to actually partake of its benefits. After expounding his view of the universal sufficiency of the atonement, Owen says that this is the basis for

The general publishing of the gospel unto 'all nations', with the right that it hath to be preached to 'every creature' (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15); because the way of salvation which it declares is wide enough for all to walk in. (42)

We have already seen that Owen believed in universal offers of grace, and therefore this statement is not surprising. What must be

(42) DD , p.297.

said is that his view cannot be deduced from his theory of a limited satisfaction. If Christ has only made payment for the sins of the elect, how can it be argued that the 'way of salvation' is 'wide enough for all to walk in'? The command to 'preach the gospel to every creature' (Mark 16:15) surely assumes that the 'credit facilities' of grace are universally available. Gospel proclamation is the announcement of this fact. A strictly limited provision makes such a view impossible. The reformers would have no difficulty in speaking as Owen has done, but Owen himself cannot consistently do so. In other words, Hussey, Brine, Gill and the other hypercalvinist theologians of the eighteenth century employed the very kind of commercialism espoused by Owen to deny the validity of universal offers of grace. (43) What Owen gives with one hand in asserting the church's obligation to preach the gospel to all, he takes back with the other in his theory of a restricted satisfaction for the sins of the elect.

If it is asserted that grace is only provided for the elect, then Owen cannot avoid the objection that those who are addressed with the gospel must first discover if they are elect before they believe upon Christ. But surely, it is necessary for the sinner to be persuaded that Christ has died for him before he trusts in Christ (44). Owen's reply amounts to this. The promises of the gospel are

(43) See P. Toon, Hypercalvinism, pp.70f.

(44) Thus Bellamy argues, 'But if God is reconcilable only to the elect, then I may not come, I dare not come, it would be presumption to come, till I know that I am elected.' Op. cit., p.311.

simply a declaration to men that it is their duty 'to believe the call of Christ'. They affirm

The command of God and the call of Christ to be infallibly declarative of that duty which is required of the person commanded and called.... (45)

Owen denies that a knowledge of a provision of grace is necessary for someone to come to Christ. It is sufficient to be aware of God's command to believe. This is arguably a very deficient reply. It fails to meet the objection (46). Whilst there is definite New Testament evidence for arguing the duty of sinners to repent and believe (Acts 17:30; Romans 1:5; 16:26; II Thessalonians 1:8; I John 3:23), it is surely only half the story to account for the message of salvation in such terms. Once the guilty sinner is persuaded of his duty, what is there to encourage him to believe that he has a right to come to Christ, if atonement has only been made for the elect? (47) Is it not questionable for God to command mankind to perform a duty if no provision has been made to enable them to perform it? Is not believing upon Christ precisely a confident realisation that with the command to do so there is the promise of grace for all who are thus commanded? Is not the assertion that Christ has died for all intended to convey such encouragement? Owen's ready admission of the reality of common grace must be relevant here, and such must be rooted in a broader conception

(45) DD, p.410.

(46) Baxter's solution is that the gospel is, notwithstanding divine election, a 'universal conditional gift of pardon and life, Mark 16:16; John 3:16, etc.' CT, Bk. 2, p.62.

(47) Bellamy insists 'No man at all, can rationally take any encouragement, until he knows that he is elected. Because, until then, he cannot know that there is any ground of encouragement.' Op. cit., p.311.

of the atonement than he allows. In other words, Baxter's solution is far more coherent than Owen's:

Christ's sacrifice for sin, and his perfect holiness, are so far satisfactory and meritorious for all men, as that they render Christ a meet object for that faith in him which is commanded men, and no man shall be damned for want of the satisfactoriness of Christ's sacrifice, or for want of a Saviour to die for him, and fulfil all righteousness, but only for the abusing or refusing of his mercy. (48)

Baxter's reply also touches on a matter dealt with earlier, that Owen cannot vindicate God in charging men with unbelief if grace was not provided for them. It has been demonstrated that Wesley's reply to Owen's position is irrefutable. With regard to Owen's emphasis upon the duty of mankind to repent and believe, it is a further point of considerable significance that the hypercalvinists of later generations rejected the concepts of 'duty-faith' and 'duty-repentance'. They were being thoroughly consistent, for if, in their view, grace is not promised to all, it is untenable to urge indiscriminately the duties in question (49). In other words, the logic of Owen's whole treatment of the doctrine of satisfaction leads inexorably to the fatalistic tenets of hypercalvinism. Although he would emphatically reject such a position, he cannot consistently argue for any alternative.

Theological developments proved that the kind of convictions taught by Owen possessed a momentum which has never been successfully

(48) CT, Bk. 1, Part II, p.51 (emphasis mine). Gary Long accuses those who teach a dualistic view of the atonement of being guilty of 'theological double talk'. Long asks how can anyone know, in coming to Christ, if he is one of those whom Christ will bring infallibly to glory, or one who is simply responding to the conditional offers of mercy? See Definite Atonement (1977), p.24. Such a question fails to understand the dualistic position. The gospel is proclaimed as a conditional offer to all - the elect as well as others. Only by believing and persevering in grace can anyone deduce signs of election, not otherwise. (II Peter 1:10) Richard Watson, from the Arminian side, makes a similar criticism, with an equal misunderstanding. Op. cit., Vol. 2, p.420.

opposed. Sufficient has been said so far, to demonstrate that the hypercalvinist tendencies in Owen's exegesis can only be negated by adopting the kind of dualistic view of the atonement advocated by Calvin, Baxter and other moderate Calvinists. In the case of Baxter himself, he seemed to be unaware of the uneasy alliance in Owen's writings between the doctrine of common grace on one hand and the doctrine of limited atonement on the other. Had he been aware of this, he might have exposed the internal contradictions inherent in Owen's position. Instead, much of the controversy revolved around an alternative theory of the atonement advocated by Hugo De Groot, or Grotius (1583-1645), the Dutch jurist-divine. His Governmental theory of the atonement introduced an entirely new element into the discussion which partly clarified and partly clouded the issues in question. Owen discusses the contribution of Grotius in some detail in the course of his treatment of the doctrine of satisfaction. A continuing analysis of Owen necessarily involves an assessment of Baxter's part in the debate, since he takes the side of Grotius in some aspects of it.

Owen's concern over the views of Grotius is easily understood. The Governmental theory of the atonement threatened the very commercialism on which Owen's theory of satisfaction rested. Whilst Grotius' initial concern was to oppose the Socinian theory of satisfaction (50),

(49) See M. R. Watts, The Dissenters (1978), pp.457f, and Andrew Fuller, The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation (1785) (2nd. ed. 1801), pp.28f, K. Dix, Particular Baptists and Strict Baptists, An Historical Survey, Bulletin No. 13 (1976), Toon, English Strict Baptists, BQ, XXI (1965). Article XV of the Particular Baptist Church, Stamford, is a typical example: 'We deny that Christ died for all mankind....We deny duty-faith, duty-repentance, and free will in man....We deny offers of grace.... (Articles of Faith and Rules of the Particular Baptist Church, Stamford (1859), p.5. See also the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Societies (1926), Article XXVI, p.12.

(50) Grotius' work was entitled: Defensio Fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christe, contra F. Socinum (1617). See Sell, op. cit., pp.27,32. For Grotius, see Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. J. Hastings, Vol.6, pp.440-443.

his alternative theory rejected the very commercial analogies against which Socinus had objected (51). The Governmental theory thus became a via media between the Reformed and Socinian theories of the atonement. Hodge makes the point that although Grotius used the conventional terms employed by reformed divines, he attaches a different sense to them (52). Grotius' views may be summarised as follows:

1. In demanding satisfaction for sin, God acts not in the capacity of an offended individual, concerned with his personal honour or lordly authority, nor as a creditor demanding strict payment for debts incurred. God demands satisfaction as 'rector' or lawgiver.
2. God demands satisfaction in the interests of 'government', conceived in terms of the good of the 'community'. The reason for punishment is the prevention of crime and the preservation of order in the community, not a display of vindictive retribution.
3. Good government cannot exist if sin is not deterred by a demonstration of its consequences. Therefore, Christ was punished as an example, to exhibit God's displeasure against sin. As a result of Christ's death, God can, as a good governor, relax the demands of His law in remitting the penalty in the case of repentant sinners.
4. Christ did not undergo the full penalty of the law, which demands that the offender suffers eternal death. Therefore, God relaxed the law, not merely with regard to the offender, but also with regard to the penalty. Christ's sufferings were therefore not an exact payment, demanded by the law, but a non-quantitative equivalent satisfaction acceptable to the lawgiver.
5. Since God is satisfied by the equivalent or substituted sufferings of Christ, the pardon of sin is a matter of grace, rather than the result of a commercial transaction.

(51) See William Cunningham on the Socinian view, which asserts that 'Christ did not make a true and real satisfaction for our sins, because he did not in fact pay what was due to God by us, and and especially because He suffered only temporal, while we had incurred eternal, death.' Historical Theology, (4th. ed. 1960), Vol. 2, p.307.

(52) Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, p.573.



God would 'owe' the repenting sinner pardon, if Christ had paid the strictly required 'debt', Furthermore, since the death of Christ was not a commercial transaction, there is no inherent limitation in the atonement itself, which is thus available for all.

Owen has no difficulty in establishing that Grotius' rectoral conception of God is inadequate. Whilst it is not denied that God is considered as 'the supreme Lord and Governor of all, the only lawgiver' (53), Owen shows the biblical validity of those other conceptions of God which Grotius rejects:

That God in the whole is the party offended by our sins is by all confessed. It is his law that is broken, his glory that is impaired, his honour that is abased by our sin: 'If I be a father,' saith he, 'where is mine honour?' (Malachi 1:6)....In respect of us, he is as a creditor, and all we miserable debtors; to him we owe the 'ten thousand talents,' (Matthew 18:24)....And our Saviour hath taught us to call our sins our 'debts' Matthew 6:12; and the payment of this debt the Lord requireth and exacteth of us. (54)

The chief objection which has been brought against Grotius is that a theory of justice alien to Judeo-Christian tradition was incorporated into the theory of government underlying his view of the atonement. The objection concentrates not on the fact of government but its form. R. L. Dabney succinctly makes this point when he accuses Grotius of 'likening God's penalties to those of secular government' (55). In arguing on the basis of the deterrent theory of punishment which, as Leonard Hodgson rightly observes, is not really a theory of punishment at all (56), Grotius gave up, in the

(53) DD, p.270.

(54) Ibid, p.270.

(55) Discussions: Evangelical and Theological (1890, 1967 rep.), Vol. 1, p.469 (emphasis mine). For Dabney (1820-1898), see DAB.

(56) The Doctrine of the Atonement (1951), p.55.

words of Ritschl, 'the idea of the penal satisfaction of past sins' for the 'penal example for the prevention of future sins'. (57) In other words, Grotius must be regarded as one of the earliest writers to call in question the concept of retributive justice. Indeed, making the bonum universi or good of the community the criterion of justice, Grotius may be regarded as a protoutilitarian. It is surely significant, not only that Jeremy Bentham, 'the father of utilitarianism', cited David Hume in support of his ethical theory (58) but that Hume in turn appeals to Grotius' theory of justice (59). For all his dependence on Grotius, the Wesleyan theologian Richard Watson criticises him for leaning too much to the idea of governmental expediency (60).

It is not to be expected that, in the pre-Kantian era, Owen would provide an incisive criticism of Grotius on this point. However, he says that the 'good of the community' is 'the glory of God' exclusively, and that these things 'in him' cannot be distinguished. It is surely arguable to say that God acts with primary reference to His own glory, and secondarily with regard to the good of his creatures, but Owen is perhaps hesitant to admit a secondary spring of action in God as a result of his 'kindness and love' (Titus 3:4) when he denies 'that there is anything in him or done by him primarily for the good of any but himself' (61). However, Owen does touch on the acknowledged weakness in Grotius' theory by insisting that, in the atonement, God

(57) Quoted in R. W. Dale, The Atonement, p.358.

(58) See J. S. Mill, Utilitarianism (ed. Mary Warnock) (1962), p.14. (This volume includes selected writings of Bentham.)

(59) Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, in Enquiries.... ed. A. Selby-Bigge (imp.1963), p.306f.

(60) Theological Institutes Vol. 2, p.139.

(61) DD, p.271.

acts out of considerations of 'severe justice'. There is no suggestion in Owen of a 'repudiation of the notion of retributive punishment' (62), as is evident from his understanding of propitiation (63). Owen emphatically rejects the view that Christ was, in his death, merely a penal example, to deter mankind from sin. The atonement involved 'the laying of our sin on Christ, or making him to be sin for us' (64). In short, Christ's death was a substitutionary atonement. Divine justice was satisfied in the punishment of the substitute, or, as Owen says, there was a 'relaxation of the law' by 'the supreme power of the lawgiver....' as to the persons suffering the punishment required' (65).

In discussing the actual penalty paid by Christ, Owen takes issue with Grotius. The Dutchman argued that Christ did not undergo the full penalty of the law, which demands that the offender should suffer eternal death. Therefore God relaxed the law, not merely with regard to the offender, but also with regard to the penalty. Christ was the substitute, but his sufferings were also substituted sufferings. They were not an exact payment - solutio ejusdem, but a non-quantitative equivalent payment - solutio tantidem, acceptable to the law-giver. It is this observation which challenges the 'payment-God-will-not-twice-demand' principle noted earlier. As far

(62) Hodgson, op. cit., p.53. See Owen, A Dissertation on Divine Justice (1653), Works, Vol. 10, p.481f.

(63) Modern scholarship has witnessed considerable discussion over the subject of 'propitiation'. Owen was in no doubt that 'the word hilasmos, or propitiation, which Christ is said to be, is that whereby the law is covered, God appeased and reconciled, sin expiated, and the sinner pardoned....' DD, p.222. Since R. W. Dale wrote that the purpose of the death of Christ was to 'turn away the wrath of God' (The Atonement (1875) (1905 ed.), p.226), scholars such as Hastings Rashdall (The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology (1919)), C. H. Dodd (Commentary on Romans (1942)), and others have rejected such an understanding of propitiation. However, J. K. Mozlev (The Doctrine of the Atonement (1915)), Emil Brunner (The Mediator (1934)), James Denney (The Death of Christ (1951)), Leonard Hodgson, (The Doctrine of the Atonement (1951)), Karl Barth (Church Dogmatics

as Owen is concerned, any concession at this point would entirely undermine the commercialist basis of his theory of satisfaction, and thus his theory of a limited atonement.

Notwithstanding anything said to the contrary, the death of Christ made satisfaction in the very thing that was required in the obligation. He took away the curse, 'by being made a curse', Galations 3:13. He delivered us from sin, being 'made sin', II Corinthians 5:21. He underwent death, that we might be delivered from death. All our debt was in the curse of the law, which he wholly underwent. Neither do we read of any relaxation of the punishment in the Scripture.... (66)

It is of credit to Owen that he saw the vital importance of what might appear a dispute of no real significance. Indeed, William Cunningham thought Owen attached too much importance to it (67). Cunningham was not seemingly aware that Owen's position viz, Christ payed the idem rather than the tantundem, was essential to the very view of the atonement espoused by Cunningham himself. But the Scottish theologian virtually expresses here the same kind of view Owen was anxious to refute (68). Cunningham obviously agrees with Owen's criticism of Grotius, but he suggests an alternative view which is equally open to that very criticism. Instead

(63) continued/ (1956)), Leon Morris (The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross (1960)), and John Murray (Redemption Accomplished and Applied (1961)) have conclusively vindicated the kind of view maintained by Owen. However, unlike Owen, who denies that 'the sins of everyone are expiated', Brunner (op. cit., p.506), Barth (op. cit., Vol. 4, p.664f), Denney (op. cit., p.151), and Morris (op. cit., p.200f) all assume a universal dimension in expiation.

(64) DD, p.268.

(65) Op. cit., p.273.

(66) Op. cit., p.269.

(67) Historical Theology (ed. 1960), Vol. 2, p.307.

(68) 'The difference between the temporary suffering of one being and the eternal sufferings of millions of other beings, is so great, as to their outward aspects and adjuncts, or accompanying circumstances, as to make it not very unreasonable that men should hesitate about calling them the same thing. Cunningham, op. cit., p.307.

of Grotius's view, viz, Christ paid an equivalent, or the tantundem, Cunningham considers that 'the Scripture doctrine of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ seems to be fully brought out, if His death be represented as a full equivalent or an adequate compensation for the sins of men' (69). It is surely in order to ask what is the real difference between an equivalent and a full equivalent, between a compensation and an adequate compensation? Do the adjectives make a significant difference? Is Cunningham implying that Grotius argued as if God accepted a partial equivalent and inadequate compensation? Cunningham's position would not satisfy Owen. Whatever difference exists in Cunningham's conception when compared with that of Grotius, he has obviously forsaken the ground occupied by Owen, with serious implications for the doctrine of a limited atonement. Cunningham believes that denying the strict equality between Christ's sufferings and penalty demanded by the law can be compensated for by appealing to the 'infinite dignity' of Christ's person. His sufferings were 'properly infinite in weight or value as a penal infliction, and thus substantially identical, in the eye of justice and law, with the eternal punishment which sinners had deserved.'(70). This is arguably very questionable reasoning. Is it coherent to suggest that qualitative values can be added to quantitative values to produce a quantified result? Cunningham's

(69) Ibid, p.307.

(70) Ibid, p.307.

argument involves a 'category mistake' (71). An illustration will expose the confusion latent in Cunningham's and Owen's commercialism. Let us suppose that the penalty for a murder is life imprisonment. If Lord X is found guilty of the murder and is sentenced to only five years because of his noble status, it makes no sense to say that the penalty is quantitatively equivalent to that which might be required of a common citizen guilty of the same crime? Even if the law might be relaxed in the case of Lord X, no kind of computation can say there is a quantitative equivalence or sameness of payment. There can be no 'substantial identity' as Cunningham suggests. In short, he cannot achieve the same conclusion as Owen's strict commercialism is attempting to achieve, by an incoherent synthesis of qualitative and quantitative considerations. This is not to deny the validity of the premise of the argument, but to insist that the relatively short, yet infinite 'dignity' of Christ's sufferings can only amount to a qualitative equivalence, viz, his satisfaction was acceptable to God in lieu of the satisfaction demanded by the law (72).

If Cunningham fails to compute a coherent 'sameness' between Christ's satisfaction and the penalty demanded by the law, Owen insists, unlike Cunningham, that there is a sameness:

It was a full, valuable compensation, made to the justice of God, for all the sins of all those for whom he made satisfaction, by undergoing that same punishment which, by reason of the obligation that was upon them, they themselves

(71) See Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (1966), p.17.

(72) The proposition 'one apple + one apple = 2 apples' is strictly quantitative and perfectly intelligible. The proposition 'a delicious apple +  $\frac{1}{2}$  apple = x' cannot give an intelligible quantitative value to 'x' in any sense equal to '2 apples', although it might be regarded as an acceptable equivalent on qualitative grounds. Note: 'Equivalence' is being used in the sense of 'procuring the same end' i.e. acceptance', as a quantitative 'sameness' would achieve. See Baxter's Aphorismes, p.302.

were bound to undergo. When I say the same, I mean essentially the same in weight and pressure, though not in all the accidents of duration and the like; for it was impossible that he should be detained by death. (73)

We have already noted the basis for Owen's case. Christ, he says, was made a curse for us, alluding to Galatians 3:13. Now this Pauline statement refers in turn to Deuteronomy 21:23 which states that those who 'hang on a tree' are 'accursed of God'. The 'curse' is plainly the sentence of death, with no hope of reprieve or resurrection. However, Owen agrees that eternal death is included in the law's penalty. Since he asserts that Christ suffered death for a limited duration, in no sense can he argue that Christ paid the idem - the same penalty demanded by the law. Owen earlier admitted that there was a relaxation of the law in respect of the persons suffering in the Old Testament sacrifices where 'the life of the beast was accepted for the life of the man'. Surely, if the lamb was substituted for men, were not the lamb's sufferings substituted for the punishment due to men also? In neither respect was there a sameness. The most his key text can prove is that Christ was accursed of God for a limited period of time. How therefore can Owen demonstrate his case? A closer analysis of the above statement reveals that he employs the aristotelian metaphysical distinction between essence (or substance) and accidents. The 'weight and pressure' of Christ's sufferings were the essence of

(73) DD, pp.269-270 (emphases mine).

his punishment (i.e. presumably the intensity of physical and spiritual agony and a sense of the Father's displeasure), whereas the 'duration' of the death-state, etc., constitute the accidents of it. On what grounds does Owen separate the features of Christ's suffering in this artificial manner? Is not duration of the state of death as basic a feature of the threatened suffering as its intensity? Owen could not agree that it is (since he would then be committed to denying that Christ's suffering was the same as that of eternal punishment); but resorting to an aristotelian conception of reality does not actually help Owen's case. (74)

If Bertrand Russell is right in describing Aristotle's substance/accidents distinction as a 'muddleheaded notion, incapable of precision' (75), then Owen cannot argue that Christ's satisfaction was the same as that demanded by the law. Since no meaning can be attached to the essence of something<sup>^</sup> apart from its properties or accidents, it follows that the duration of suffering is as much a defining property of suffering as its other features. It is meaningless to speak of the essence of something, as something different from, and additional to, its properties. It is invalid, for example, to speak of the essence of an apple, as if that was something over and above say, its greenness, roundness and taste. The apple is the sum of its properties. In other words, the limited

(74) What a modern writer in the same school as Owen says about Edward Williams has equal relevance to Owen himself: 'Edward Williams did not see that one cannot erect a Biblical system on the foundation of reason, for a man's basic philosophical viewpoint determines the end-products of his theologising. A man's philosophy is all-important....What a man believes about the Bible and Jesus Christ cannot be divorced from his basic philosophical positions.' Geoffrey Thomas, Edward Williams and the Rise of Modern Calvinism, BOT, March, 1971, p.33.

(75) History of Western Philosophy (1961 ed.). p.177. See also Aristotle's Metaphysics, ed. and tr. J. Warrington, (1961 rep.), pp.18, 46, 167f and 333.



duration of Christ's sufferings forbids Owen from asserting that they were the idem and not the tantundem.

When Richard Baxter published his Aphorismes of Justification (1649), he criticised Owen's discussion of Grotius in an appendix. Following Grotius, Baxter insisted that because of the obvious differences between Christ's sufferings and the penalty demanded by the law, God relaxed the law, both with regard to the person suffering and the penalty suffered. Therefore, Christ paid not the idem, but the tantundem (76). Whilst Owen maintains his basic position in his reply to Baxter, he is arguably a little less confident in his aristotelianism:

The whole penalty of sin is death, Genesis 2:17.  
....It is true, this death may be considered either in respect of its essence (if I may be allowed so to speak), which is called the 'pains of hell', which Christ underwent, Psalm 116:3, 22:1, Luke 22:44; or of its attendencies, as duration and like, which he could not undergo. Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:24-28. (77)

Owen invokes yet another aristotelian distinction, i.e. between potentiality and actuality, when he says

So that whereas eternal death may be considered two ways, either as such in potentia, and in its own nature, or as actually, so our Saviour underwent it not in the latter, but first sense. (Hebrews 2:9,14).... (78)

If Christ did not actually suffer eternal death, but merely 'taste' it (Hebrews 2:9?), can Owen still argue that Christ suffered the idem? Committing the same 'category mistake' noted in Cunningham,

(76) See Baxter's argument in The Scripture Gospel Defended (1690), pp.47,48.

(77) Of the Death of Christ, The Price He paid and the Purchase He Made (1650), in Works, Vol. 10, p.448. See Baxter's Aphorismes of Justification (1655 ed.), pp.301f.

(78) Ibid, p.448.

Owen replies in an unconvincing and almost concessionary tone.

The dignity of Christ's person

Raises the estimate of punishment, is equipotent to the other. There is a sameness in Christ's sufferings with that in the obligation in respect of essence, and equivalency in respect of attendencies. (79)

In view of the earlier criticism of the aristotelian essence/accidents distinction, Owen's admission that the attendencies (or accidents) of Christ's death are equivalent to, rather than the same as that required by the law, demand the acceptance of the very view he is seeking to refute. In other words, Owen is obliged to concede that Christ paid, not the same penalty demanded by the law, but an equivalent, acceptable to God, the law-giver. As with the person who suffered, so the sufferings he endured were substituted sufferings. Owen cannot therefore make good the sine qua non of his theory of a limited atonement. His commercialism cannot be sustained without the dubious assistance of aristotelian metaphysics. Had Baxter exposed Owen's crucial dependence upon aristotelianism, the vulnerability of the particularist thesis would have been detected more readily. However, it was too early for Aristotle to be challenged. Locke and Hume, whose empiricist critique has suggested the kind of criticism advanced in this study, were yet to be.\*

The final issue in Owen's discussion of Grotius concerns the doctrine of grace. Since Christ and his sufferings were substituted,

(79) Ibid, p.448. Owen further discusses the idem - tantundem issue in Vindiciae Evangelicae (1655), Works, Vol.12, pp.492, 494. In his Confession of Faith (1655), Baxter not only accused Owen of antinomianism, he also argued that the idem view was responsible for it. Owen replied to Baxter in an appendix to Vindiciae Evangelicae, op. cit., pp.591f. See especially pp.613-615.

\*Note: This remark does not imply a general acceptance of empiricism, especially where Hume is concerned.

the pardon of sin becomes a fact of grace, rather than the results of a commercial transaction. Grotius argues that as the giving of Christ was an act of divine grace, so the dispensing of pardon to repenting sinners is also of grace. Had the commercial view been true, then God would be tied to the strict observance of a commercial transaction, viz, Christ's sufferings were equal to the debts of the elect, therefore pardon is owed to them by God.

Owen replies by saying that 'The laying of our sin on Christ, or making him to be sin for us....was merely and purely an act of free grace....' He adds that there is a 'free application of the death of Christ unto us' (80). But Owen fails to demonstrate how this application is 'free', rather than 'owed'. The commercial theory cannot really do justice to Paul's words 'Being justified freely by his grace (Romans 3:24). Andrew Fuller emphasised this point in his critique of the commercial theory:

If the atonement of Christ were considered as the literal payment of a debt....it would be....inconsistent with the free forgiveness of sin, and with sinners being directed to apply for mercy as suppliants, rather than as claimants. (81)

Fuller's statement reinforces the criticism made earlier that before anyone believes upon Christ they must first discover if they are elect. Only then dare they claim what is owed them by God as a result of the satisfaction paid by Christ on their behalf. This

(80) DD, pp.268-9. See Baxter, 'How can he call it....a free application, if it were the same thing which the law required that was paid? To pay all according to the full exaction of the obligation, needeth no favour to procure acceptance....' Op. cit., p.304.

(81) The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation (1785), p.109. Fuller's early theological activity only 'moderated' 'hypercalvinism' to 'high Calvinism'. He still argued, like Owen, that the salvation of the elect was the one 'end which the Saviour had in view'. Ibid, p.110. Fuller, though accused of 'Baxterian' sentiments, insisted that he was a 'strict Calvinist' rather than a 'moderate Calvinist' because he claimed to hold 'the system of Calvin'. Works, ed. A. G. Fuller (1831), Vol. 1, pp.cxv, lxiv. He was obviously unaware of the close similarity

is arguably out of character with the biblical doctrine of grace.

It is evident therefore that whilst Grotius' contribution helps to clarify some aspects of the subject in question, his use of contemporary political thought added an element of confusion. His theory is justly objected to on account of his inadequate conception of God as 'universal rector' or governor, and his utilitarian-style theory of justice. However, it is arguable that his thoughts on the penalty paid by Christ and the gracious character of pardon mark an important and valuable addition to earlier theories of the atonement. With regard to the latter, it was inevitable that Owen should oppose Grotius, but in this, it appears he was unsuccessful. Only by resorting to dubious metaphysical distinctions could Owen hope to vindicate his position, but this proved singularly unhelpful. It would seem that the type of dualistic view of the atonement taught by the reformers, Baxter and later moderate Calvinists is not at all threatened by Owen's particularist thesis.

Before we take a detailed look at the thought of John Wesley, some concluding observations must be made on Baxter's precise position vis-a-vis Grotius. It is true that Baxter sided with Grotius against Owen on the matters already discussed, but it is doubtful whether criticism of Baxter has been sufficiently discriminating.

- (81) continued/ between Calvin's actual views and those of Baxter. There is definite evidence that Fuller moved more in Baxter's direction. In the famous footnote in The Gospel its own Witness (1800), Fuller entertains a much broader conception of grace than in his earlier work. See Works, op. cit., p.114. Also, A. H. Kirkby, The Theology of Andrew Fuller and its Relation to Calvinism, Ph.D (1956) Edinburgh; Andrew Fuller-Evangelical Calvinist, BQ, XV, (1954), and Andrew Fuller (1961); E. F. Clipsham, Andrew Fuller and Fullerism, BQ, XX (1963); T. E. Watson, Andrew Fuller's Conflict with Hyper-Calvinism, in How Shall They Hear? , Puritan Conference Report (1960).

J. I. Packer accuses Baxter of 'interpreting the kingdom of God in terms of contemporary political ideas' (i.e. he was influenced by Grotius), and that his 'political method', 'if taken seriously, was objectionably rationalistic' (82). There is partial truth in this criticism, especially where Baxter's use of political analogies is concerned. This matter will be discussed in depth in the next section. However, G. P. Fisher has justly defended Baxter against the charge of rationalism (83). Nevertheless, the important differences between Baxter and Grotius are not sufficiently realised.

Although Baxter rejected the commercialism of Owen, he did not, like Grotius, reject the commercial language of Scripture per se. After all, he would not contest the biblical references cited by Owen against Grotius on this point. Yet Baxter did not forget that 'All our terms concerning God are plainly metaphorical' (84) and that 'all this similitude of a creditor and debtor, is to be limited in the application, according to the great difference of sin and debt (85). Tillotson warned against the dangers of an excessive use of metaphorical language (86), a charge which even Baxter is open to in his use of the governmental analogy, and more recent writers of the moderate Calvinist school have pointed out that analogy is not identity (87).

- (82) Introduction to The Reformed Pastor (1974 ed.), pp.9-10. See also Packer's unpublished D. Phil. thesis: The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the thought of Richard Baxter (1954).
- (83) The Writings of Richard Baxter, Bibliotheca Sacra, (1851), Vol. 9, p.300. See Powicke's discussion of this aspect of 'Baxterianism' in The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross, pp.238f. For Baxter himself, see The Arrogancy of Reason against Divine Revelations Repressed (1655). 'Reason as reprieved in order to recovery, and reason as illuminated are certainly a sort of common grace....' CT, Bk. 2, p.160.
- (84) Methodus Theologiae Christianae (1681), part 1, Chapter 2, p.218.
- (85) CT, Bk. 1, part 2, p.67.

It is certainly true that Baxter shared Grotius' view that the atonement satisfied God as rector or governor, and that 'the true reason of the satisfactoriness of Christ's sufferings was that they were a most apt means for the demonstration of the governing justice, holiness, wisdom and mercy of God, by which God could attain the ends of the law and government, better than by executing the law on the world in its destruction....' (88) However, we have seen that Owen himself speaks of God as the 'governor of all, the only lawgiver' (89), agreeing with Baxter and Grotius that the law was relaxed with regard to the person punished (if not to the penalty paid). In this respect, it is difficult to see any significant differences between Owen and Baxter. Furthermore, whilst Baxter admits his debt to Grotius, he considers the Dutchman 'to come short of acurateness and soundness' in viewing God in exclusively rectoral terms. Besides being rector supremus, Baxter considers God to be absolute lord (*dominus absolutus*) and friend (*amicus*) of mankind. Human sin must be seen in this triple context. Therefore 'It is true, that government and punishing justice, formally as such, belong to God only as Rector. And satisfaction is made to him eminently in that relation; yet also to compensate the injury done by sin to him in the other two relations also.' (90)

(86) 'But surely it is a dangerous thing in divinity, to build doctrines upon metaphors, especially if we strain them to all the similitudes which a quick and lively imagination can find out; whereas some one obvious thing is commonly intended in the metaphor....' Sermon LIII, Till. I, p.372.

(87) Ralph Wardlaw says, 'That sins are compared to debts is true' but 'the parallelism between sins and debts necessarily fails' since 'the obedience of one moment can only stand for itself, and cannot cover the debt incurred by the disobedience or the defective service of another.' Furthermore, 'A debt of property may be paid by another; do not be startled when I say that a debt of obedience never can.' In which case, 'The atonement of Christ....ought not to be regarded as proceeding on the principles of commutative or commercial justice' since 'the payment of debt, by strictly and literally cancelling all claim, leaves no room for the exercise of grace.' Systematic Theology (1856), Vol. 2, pp.368-9.

The most objectionable feature of Grotius' teaching was his utilitarian-style theory of justice. In this respect, there is no evidence that Baxter understood divine justice in any other terms than retributive justice. (91)

Yet did he in the person of a mediator....suffer the penalty, nostro loco, in our stead....to satisfy God's wisdom, truth and justice, and to procure pardon and life for sinners.... (92)

This quotation from Baxter goes part of the way to answering another criticism made by Packer, who sums up Baxter's view of the atonement as 'penal and vicarious', but not substitutionary' (93). It is difficult to see why Packer distinguishes between vicariousness and substitution, since the terms are virtually synonymous. Berkhof assumes that they are in his discussion of the atonement (94). Packer's distinction arises from Baxter's insistence that 'Christ did not take upon him strictly and properly, the natural or civil person of any sinner, much less of all the elect, or all sinners: but the person of a mediator between God and sinners.' (95) In other words,

(88) CT, Bk. 1, part 2, p.40.

(89) DD, p.158.

(90) CT, Bk. 1, part 2, p.69. This statement is in marked contrast to Baxter's earlier position in UR, p.51, where he totally agreed with Grotius. Baxter also criticised Grotius for his inclinations towards Roman Catholicism. See G. F. Nuttall, Richard Baxter and the Grotian Religion, in Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent, c1500-c1750, ed. D. Baker (1979), pp.245-250.

(91) Although Baxter did admit to a deterrent element in the atonement in Universal Redemption, the idea seems to have been omitted in such mature works as Catholick Theologie (1675) and End of Doctrinal Controversies (1691). Even in the early work, the deterrent aspect is secondary to the retributive, see op. cit., pp.10 and 36. The same can be said of Archbishop Tillotson, whose views also reveal the influence of Grotius. See his Sermon XLVII, Concerning the Sacrifice and Satisfaction of Christ, in Till. III, pp.554f. Like Baxter, Tillotson does not discard the commercial metaphors of Scripture.

(92) CT, Bk. 1, part 2, p.69

(93) Op. cit., p.10.

Christ was not a personal substitute for sinners in the sense that he suffered 'instead of all the sufferings due to all for whom he died' (96) (he paid the tantundem, not the idem), but he suffered in our stead as a mediator, having 'satisfied the law-giver as he is above his own law' (97). Baxter refused to interpret the Pauline phrase, that Christ was 'made sin for us' (II Corinthians 5:21) as if 'Christ was by imputation the most wicked man, the greatest thief, adulterer, murderer, or sinner in the world,' (98) in the manner of Luther (99). Christ suffered the penalty of death 'in our stead', yet he never was regarded as actually guilty, but rather as a 'sponsor who consented to suffer for sinners, that they might be delivered.' (100) In this sense did Christ suffer 'in the common nature of man, though not in the person of each sinner' (101). In short, Christ's substitutionary death was ethical, not numerical, qualitative, not quantitative. Having suffered for sin, the merits of his satisfaction are applicable to sins. Although Baxter has led many to believe that he taught something other than a dualistic view of the atonement by using the ambiguous phrase 'universal redemption' (102), his theory of the atonement amounts to saying

(94) Systematic Theology, p.376.

(95) CT, Bk. 1, part 2, p.38.

(96) Ibid, p.39.

(97) Ibid, p.40. Speaking of the law, Wardlaw says, 'It condemns the sinner personally, and makes no mention of any way in which another can bear his penalty for him. The idea of.... substitution....is something that comes not within the limits of law. Substitution....is not according to the letter of the law; nor can it be said literally to satisfy its demands. Op. cit., p.370. See also Barnes, op. cit., pp.244f and 288f.

(98) Ibid, p.39.

(99) See Luther on Galatians 3:13, and comments on this in R. W. Dale's The Atonement, p.350; also A. Barnes, op. cit., p.290.

(100) Op. cit., p.39.



that Christ's death is applicable to all, even if it is not applied to all. 'Christ therefore died for all, but not for all equally, or with the same intent, design or purpose' (103). The statement 'Christ died for all' therefore means that 'Christ died for the benefit of all' (104), the benefits in question being either of a more temporary nature in the case of some, or more permanent in the case of others, viz, the elect.

Whatever the merits or demerits of Baxter's so-called neonomianism (105) - a subject to be considered in the next section - it is doubtful whether all the blame for 'neonomian Moderation in Scotland and moralistic Unitarianism in England' (106) is to be charged upon Baxter. That these schools of thought did derive some support from Baxter's emphasis on practical holiness and his fear of antinomianism is true. But if Packer is right to accuse Baxter of providing the stimulus to a movement he would personally have disapproved of (107), it is only just to accuse Owen of having provided the raison d'etre of eighteenth century hypercalvinism (108). Even though Owen would regret the consequences of his views, the charge in his case is no less justified than in the case of Baxter, whose views were far from being the only factor in the decline of evangelical nonconformity.

(101) Ibid, p.69.

(102) See Packer, op. cit., p.10. The title of Baxter's treatise (i.e. UR), is defended in the preface by Joseph Read, who was responsible for its publication.

(103) Op. cit., p.53.

(104) Op. cit., Bk. 2, p.57. John Murray argues similarly in The Atonement and the Free Offer of the Gospel, BOT, July, 1968, p.26. See also Atonement, Encyclopaedia of Christianity (1964), p.478.

(105) Baxter says: But as to them that insist on it, that the Gospel and New Covenant are no laws, and that we have none from Christ but the Decalogue and Old Testament....I would plentifully prove them subverters of Christianity itself, and give full

continued/

II

John Wesley's teaching on the nature of the atonement possesses features altogether different from that of John Owen. This is so, both with regard to his actual views, and to the method by which he arrives at them. Nowhere does Wesley discuss and evaluate the arguments of Anselm or Grotius, and never does he employ philosophical categories to expound any aspect of the subject. In the already quoted letter to Mary Bishop, Wesley's words suggest that he was not entirely unacquainted with the discussions and controversies of former generations. (109) It is absurd to imagine that someone of Wesley's intellectual calibre was unable to arrive at some understanding of the issues in question. He was probably unwilling to commit the Methodist societies to ideas which were not immediately biblical and practical. Wesley was also a man of the eighteenth century, rather than the seventeenth. The direct appeal to evidence weighed more with Wesley than the coherence of speculative theories, a point Locke's Essay was now teaching the age of the enlightenment. As such, Wesley's methodology was entirely unambiguous. 'The question is (the only

- (105) continued/ evidence against them, to any that believe the Holy Scriptures....He that feareth not breaking the laws of Christ, shall hear at last 'Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.' Luke 19:27. CT, Bk. 1, part 2, pp.43-44. See J. I. Packer, The Doctrine of Justification in Development and Decline Among the Puritans in op. cit., pp.18f.
- (106) Packer, op. cit., p.10.
- (107) Philip Doddridge wrote that Baxter was 'spiritual and evangelical, though often charged with the contrary', Lectures on Preaching, Works, Vol. 5, p.431.
- (108) See the references to Owen in John Hurrion's sermons on particular redemption in the Lime Street Lectures (1732), Vol. 1, p.325f. Owen is the most frequently cited 'orthodox' divine. John Gill was also a lecturer in the series.
- (109) 'Our reason here is quickly bewildered. If we attempt to expiate in this field, we 'find no end, in wandering mazes lost.'  
Works, Vol. 13, p.32.

question with me; I regard nothing else), What saith the Scripture?'

(110) In the main therefore, Skevington Wood's assessment of Wesley is accurate, that explicit Scripture statements contradistinguished from theories imposed upon them, were alone relevant to the discussion (111).

As has been observed already, Wesley's method shares something of the anti-speculative mood of the latitudinarians. However, he is markedly more simplistic than Tillotson, whose sermon on the atonement shows obvious signs of the influence of Grotius, albeit in a popular guise (112). Wesley's approach is conspicuous in his own sermons. Whenever the subject in hand demands an exposition of the atonement, the presentation consists usually of a carefully selected sequence of texts. The following is a typical specimen:

Now, 'they are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' 'Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for(or by) the remission of sins that are past.' Now hath Christ taken away 'the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' He hath 'blotted out the handwriting that was against us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.' 'There is therefore no condemnation now to them which 'believe in Christ Jesus.' (113)

This paragraph is no more than a quotation of Romans 3:24, 25, Galatians 3:13, Colossians 2:14 and Romans 8:1, in rapid succession

- (110) Ibid, p.32. See Victor Budgen, John Wesley and the Biblical Criticism of his Day, BOT, issues 154-155 (1976), pp.50f.
- (111) 'Wesley was content to by-pass the historical theories of atonement and construct his doctrine straight from Scripture. He was more interested in announcing biblically-revealed facts than in spinning intricate webs of hypothesis and conjecture.' Op. cit. (1967), p.237.
- (112) Concerning the Sacrifice and Satisfaction of Christ, Sermon XLVII, Till. III, p.554f.
- (113) Salvation by Faith, Works, Vol. 5, p.8. See also Justification by Faith, ibid, pp.50,51,56; The Righteousness of Faith, Ibid, pp.68-70; Sermon on the Mount (I), ibid, p.241; The Law Established Through Faith (II), ibid, p.433; The Repentance of Believers, ibid, p.156; God's Love to Fallen Man, Vol. 6, pp.218f and The End of Christ's Coming, ibid, pp.257f.

and with virtually no exegetical gloss whatsoever. It must therefore be said, at least of his homiletic method, that Wesley is 'atheoretical'. However, such an observation forbids the conclusion that Wesley is in any way vague on the crucial aspects of the atonement. In fact, there is considerable evidence to justify R. W. Dale's remark that 'It is very possible for our theory of the atonement to be crude and incoherent, but it is hardly possible to have no theory at all.' (114) In other words, Wesley does more than merely quote Scripture, occasionally in the sermons, frequently in his Notes on the New Testament and, in a poetic form, in his hymns.

That Wesley maintains a theology of the atonement not in the least crude and incoherent has been conceded, if with a detectable degree of reluctance, by some scholars. For instance, Colin W. Williams affirms that 'the central point of the penal substitutionary theory was of great importance to Wesley.' (115) However, as Williams explains, 'Wesley did not set this element of his teaching inside a legal framework, in which God is made subject to an eternal, unalterable order of justice.' It is difficult to determine precisely in what sense Williams is attempting to qualify his observation about Wesley's position. Wesley conceived of no other 'legal framework' than the divinely revealed decalogue, nor 'an eternal, unalterable order of justice' other than the divine attribute of justice.

(114) The Atonement, p.76. 'Some conception, however vague, of the relations between human sin and the death of Christ, and between the death of Christ and the divine forgiveness, will take form and substance in the mind of every man who is in the habit of reading the New Testament, and who believes that the teaching of Christ and of his apostles reveals the thought of God.' Op. cit., p.77. See also Denney, op. cit., p.156.

(115) Op. cit., p.84.

Unless Williams has something else in mind, Wesley did relate the cross to both the law and justice of God. Certainly Wesley never resorts to the views of Grotius (116), but he does view the atonement in the context of the divine government in his notes on Romans 3:26:

That he might be just. Might evidence Himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous in the administration of His government, even while he is the merciful justifier of the sinner that believeth in Jesus. The attribute of justice was to be preserved inviolate; and inviolate it is preserved, if there was a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour. On this plan, all the attributes harmonize.... (117)

This quotation serves to refute an even more recent attempt to drive a wedge between the Wesleys' (i.e. John and Charles) conception of the atonement and that of the Protestant Reformers. Francis Frost insists (in words which apply equally to John Wesley) that Charles Wesley 'is very far from the substitutionism of a certain kind of Protestant theology which is content to present the relationship between the saving act of Jesus and ourselves in juridical terms.' (118) Had Frost said 'in merely juridical terms', his remark might stand, but then it is difficult to know what kind of 'protestant theology' he 'a Roman Catholic theologian) is referring to. The facts demand a very different conclusion. As far as John Wesley is concerned, the atonement must be viewed in juridical terms, in the light of Galatians 3:13. Wesley writes that the

(116) Only twice does Wesley refer to Grotius, but neither reference has any remote bearing upon the atonement. See Works, Vol. 10, p.5 and Vol. 12, p.399.

(117) Notes, Romans 3:26 (emphases mine).

(118) Biblical Imagery and Religious Experience in the Hymns of the Wesleys, in WHS, Vol. XLII, part 6 (December, 1980), p.161.

'curse of the law' is nothing other than 'the curse of God, which the law denounces against all transgressions of it'. Christ therefore was 'made a curse for us', since he willingly submitted to 'that death which the law pronounces peculiarly accursed'. (119) Charles Wesley's poetry is perfectly in accord with his brother's exegesis:

The types and figures are fulfilled,  
Exacted is the legal pain;  
The precious promises are sealed;  
The spotless lamb of God is slain.

Saved from the legal curse I am,  
My Saviour hangs on yonder tree:  
See there the meek, expiring lamb!  
'Tis finished! he expires for me. (120)

Whilst Frost concedes that there is in some of Charles Wesley's hymns a reference to the 'cross of Jesus as assuaging the anger of God', he confidently, yet mistakenly, asserts that 'the act by which Jesus shed his blood for us is quite definitely not reduced by Wesley to an act of substitution - a punishment suffered on our behalf' (121). In his controversy with William Law, John Wesley could not be more explicit in observing that the atonement was 'the substitution of the Messiah in the place of his people, thereby atoning for their sins....' (122) Again, Charles Wesley himself, is as explicit as his brother:

(119) Notes, Galatians 3:13 (emphases mine).

(120) 'Tis finished! the Messiah dies' in the Supplement to A Collection of Hymns for the use of the people called Methodists (1877), no. 706 (emphasis mine). This hymn was included in the 1904 MHB (no.165), but with the above quoted verses deleted, and the hymn was altogether deleted from the MHB (1933).

(121) Op.cit., p.161 (emphasis mine).

(122) An Extract of a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Law (1756), Works, Vol. 9, p.471 (emphasis mine).

For what you have done  
His blood must atone:  
The Father hath punished for you his dear Son.  
The Lord, in the day  
Of His anger, did lay  
Your sins on the lamb, and he bore them away.

He dies to atone  
For sins not his own:  
Your debt he hath paid, and your work he hath done.  
Ye all may receive  
The peace he did leave,  
Who made intercession, "My Father, forgive!"

My pardon I claim;  
For a sinner I am,  
A sinner believing in Jesus' name,  
He purchased the grace  
Which now I embrace:  
O Father, Thou knowst he hath died in my place. (123)

Here therefore is a theory of 'substitutionism', quite as definite as that advocated in reformation theology. Frost's views are therefore mistaken and inadequate, yet he obviously sees in the Wesleys' hymns something amounting to a subjective theory of atonement. There is no direct evidence that Frost is using Wesley to demonstrate a theory of atonement akin to the moral influence view of Abelard, but he does see Wesley as a possible source for this kind of position. (124) Instead of what he calls 'substitutionism', Frost believes that Wesley views the atonement as 'an intensely human and vivid revelation of that which constitutes God in His intimate nature: love. 'Thy nature and Thy name is love.' (125)

(123) Op. cit., (707), vs.2, 4 and 6 (emphasis mine). MHB (1933) v.4 deleted.

(124) See Finlayson, op. cit., p.39, and the systematic theologies.

(125) Op. cit., p.161. Frost alludes to Charles Wesley's 'Come, O Thou Traveller unknown', MHB (1933), 339. Edward Houghton expounds this hymn entirely differently, demonstrating its close affinities with Calvinistic theology. See 'Wrestling Jacob' in EQ, Vol. L, No. 2 (1978), pp.104-108. See also B. L. Manning, The Hymns of Wesley and Watts (1942), p.30.

It is true that, viewed as a whole, Wesley's conception of the atonement has a prominent subjective dimension, of the kind generally lacking in Owen. Indeed, in this respect, Methodism was more 'emotional' than Puritanism. The evidence for this is immediately apparent in perusing the hymns of the Wesleys. However, they never confused the subjective impact of the death of Christ upon the believer's life with the objective ground of the atonement. Indeed, the very satisfaction of divine justice, viewed in penal, retributive terms was the necessary condition for the display of divine love to sinful man. In short, the Wesleys viewed the cross as a revelation, at one and the same instant, of the divine justice and the divine love. (126) Therefore, the intensely emotional dimension of the atonement is not the ground of the sinner's forgiveness but the consequence of it:

Then let us sit beneath His cross,  
And gladly catch the healing stream,  
All things for Him account but loss,  
And give up all our hearts to Him;  
Of nothing think or speak beside,  
My Lord, my Love is crucified. (127)

John Wesley's lines are no less expressive than his brother's:

Let earth no more my heart divide,  
With Christ may I be crucified,  
To Thee with my whole soul aspire;  
Dead to the world and all its toys,  
Its idle pomp, and fading joys,  
Be Thou alone my one desire. (128)

(126) See Brunner, The Mediator (1934), p.520.

(127) MHB (1933), 186, v.4.

(128) Ibid, 553, v.3. Although this hymn is credited to Charles Wesley, Henry Bett is persuaded that it is from the pen of John. See The Hymns of Methodism (1945), p.25.



John Wesley could not be more in accord with either the reformers or John Owen himself in his understanding of propitiation (hilasmos). Commenting on Romans 3:25-26, Wesley asserts that Christ's death was a propitiatory sacrifice 'To appease an offended God. But if, as some teach, God never was offended, there was no need of this propitiation. And if so, Christ died in vain.' (129) Wesley's reference to those who denied that God could be offended would undoubtedly include the mystic William Law. Law had argued that there is 'no anger, no vindictive justice in God, no punishment at all inflicted by him, 'in the plainest letter of Scripture'. Wesley's reply is powerful and compelling, notwithstanding the simplicity of his method:

Whether this, or the very reverse, is true, will appear from a few out of numberless texts, which I shall barely set down, without any comment, and leave to your cool consideration.

You say, (1) There is no vindictive, avenging, or punitive justice in God. (2) There is no wrath or anger in God. (3) God inflicts no punishment on any creature, neither in this world, nor that to come.

God says:

- (1) 'The just Lord is in the midst of you.' (Zephaniah 3:5). 'Justice and judgement are the habitation of thy throne.' (Psalm 89:14), etc....
- (2) 'The Lord heard their works, and was wroth.' (Deuteronomy 1:34) 'The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes.' (Deuteronomy 3:26), etc....
- (3) 'I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity.' (Isaiah 13:11), 'Behold, the Lord cometh to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.' (Isaiah 26:21), etc....

(129) Notes, op. cit.

Now, which am I to believe? God or man? (130)

Wesley is therefore in no doubt that the atonement demonstrated, not only God's 'clemency, but His justice; even that vindictive justice whose essential character and principal office is, to punish sin.' (131)

It is increasingly clear that Wesley's conception of divine justice is not remotely similar to the opinion of Grotius. In no sense can Wesley's view be regarded as 'eudaemonistic' or utilitarian. Furthermore, Wesley's total neglect of Grotius is in marked contrast to the thought of the Wesleyan theologian Richard Watson, whose discussion on the subject of satisfaction in his Theological Institutes reveals considerable dependence on the Dutchman. This important observation was not made by James Nichols in his Calvinism and Arminianism Compared (1824), (132). In short, Wesley's theology of the atonement owes more to reformation Anglicanism than to later continental influences, notwithstanding his acquiescence in Arminian universalism.

Further evidence that Wesley did more than merely quote Scripture is seen in his frequent reference to the Prayer Book and the Homilies. In the following quotation, there is a blend of Wesley's direct appeal to Scripture and his use of the interpretative glosses contained in the Prayer Book:

(130) An Extract of a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Law, Works, Vol. 9 pp.464-5.

(131) Notes, Romans 3:26.

(132) Bernard Semmel refers to Nichol's work uncritically when he says, 'In the 1820's, under the scholarly instruction of James Nichols, Methodism was to identify 'true' Evangelical Arminianism as that of Arminius himself, of Grotius, and of Wesley, ....' The Methodist Revolution (1974), p.105.

Then was he 'wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. 'He made his soul an offering for sin: 'he poured out his blood for the transgressors: he 'bare our sins in his own body on the tree, 'that by his stripes we might be healed: and by that one oblation of himself, once offered, he hath redeemed me and all mankind; having thereby 'made a full perfect and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.' (133)

It is clear, from this and similar quotes, that Wesley, unlike Owen, but very much like Calvin and the Anglican reformers, views the key terms 'redemption' and 'satisfaction' in the sense of a universally sufficient provision for all. In other words, the nature of the atonement itself does not imply any restriction. Wesley, therefore, does not appeal to a Grotian-style theory in order to oppose the commercialism of high-Calvinism, as Baxter partially did. The original reformation conception was quite adequate for Wesley's purposes, a point which the next quotation amply demonstrates:

Therefore, have a sure and constant faith, not only that the death of Christ is available for all the world, but that he hath made a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee, a perfect cleansing of thy sins, so that thou mayest say, with the Apostle, he loved thee, and gave himself for thee. For this is to make Christ thine own, and to apply his merits unto thyself. - Sermon on the Sacrament, First Part. (134)

The evidence therefore demands the fascinating conclusion that, the question of extent of application apart, Wesley's theology of the atonement is closer to Calvin and the Reformers than Owen's is.

(133) Justification by Faith, Works, Vol. 5, p.50. Wesley quotes from Isaiah 53 and I Peter 2:24. The emphasised quotes derive from the Catechism and Communion service.

(134) Ibid, p.56. Wesley's quote is not quite verbatim. The original is possibly more forceful. '....the death of Christ is available for the redemption of all the world, for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with God the Father; but also that he hath made upon his cross a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee....so that thou acknowledgest no other Saviour, redeemer, mediator, advocate, intercessor, but Christ only....' Homilies, (1822), p.413.

Wesley, albeit in very different terms from Owen, did not teach a universal application of the atonement, but he was at liberty to assert that, from its very nature, it was unrestricted in its provision. Because Wesley appeals to the original reformation view rather than that of Grotius in rejecting the implications of the kind of commercialism taught by Owen, he is not in the least inhibited in equating 'sins' analogically with 'debts':

What unparalleled condescension and divinely tender mercies are displayed in this verse! (II Corinthians 5:20) Did the judge ever beseech a condemned criminal to accept of pardon? Does the creditor ever beseech a ruined debtor to receive an acquittance in full? Yet our almighty Lord, and our eternal judge, not only vouchsafes to offer these blessings, but invites us, entreats us, and, with the most tender importunity, solicits us, not to reject them. (135)

Here is language which Calvin would entirely approve of, if Owen would not. Indeed, Calvin is equally as uninhibited as Wesley. After saying that Paul makes the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ the 'foundation and cause' of our reconciliation, Calvin concludes that

He says that as He once suffered, so now every day He offers the fruit of His suffering to us through the Gospel which He has given to the world as a sure and certain record of His completed work of reconciliation. (136)

Wesley's and Calvin's thoughts on the 'ambassadorial' character of gospel proclamation in II Corinthians 5 brings us to one of Owen's most important arguments against universalism. Owen argues

(135) Notes, II Corinthians 5:20.

(136) Comment, II Corinthians 5:19, (emphases mine).

that, in the event, grace has not been provided for all, since all have not heard the gospel:

How can they believe unless they hear? Can they be bound to believe that of which they never heard the least rumour? How many millions of infants and others, in barbarous nations, go to their 'own place' without hearing the least report of Jesus Christ, or his sufferings for them or others, even in these days of the gospel! how much more, then, before the coming of Christ in the flesh, when the means of grace were restrained to one small nation, with some few proselytes! Were all these, are they that remain, all and everyone, bound to believe that Christ died for them, all and everyone in particular? Those that think so are, doubtless, bound to go tell all of them so; I mean those that are yet in the land of the living. (137)

Owen's argument appears to be that since God has not, in the course of His providence, actually brought the gospel to all men, therefore, Christ has not died for all. He seems to be unaware of the obligation of the church to engage in missions, as a result of Christ's commission to the apostles (Matthew 28:19), and that the church will be judged responsible for failing to declare the gospel to all (Ezekiel 3:18). There can be no doubt that both Wesley and Calvin viewed the universal sufficiency of the atonement as the basis for general evangelistic enterprise. Owen's particularism has the effect of inverting the biblical order (138). In other words, since Christ has died for all, then the church is under obligation to declare the message of salvation to all (139). Owen's remark that those who think Christ has died for all are 'bound to

(137) DD, pp.405-6 (emphases mine). Owen cannot be correct in placing the ignorance of nations under the Old Testament on the same footing as ignorance of nations under the New Testament. The universalist case should only be discussed in the context of the gospel age.

(138) We have already discovered that although Owen formally acknowledges general offers of grace, his concept of sufficiency actually undermines his position. Here, Owen is being more consistent with his particularist thesis.

(139) The proclamation of the gospel, which Calvin understood as the 'offer' of God's 'completed work of reconciliation', assumes the ready availability of universally sufficient grace prior to its actual declaration to mankind. See Denney, op. cit., p.85.

go tell all of them so' is surely a reflection on the general unawareness of missionary responsibility, characteristic of the seventeenth century. It would be unjust to reflect on Owen in particular, and to accuse him alone of what was largely the deficiency of his age. But, it is surely a fact of the greatest significance that it was Baxter, and not Owen, who supported so enthusiastically the work of John Eliot amongst the Indians of Massachusetts (140). There is an obvious theological link between Baxter's incipient missionary activity and the impulse which animated William Carey to commence the missionary era proper. Owen's words are a latent example of the kind of hypercalvinist prejudice Carey and Andrew Fuller had to overcome in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society (141).

We have demonstrated that Wesley's theology of the atonement leaves nothing to be desired, judged by the criteria of reformation theology. In terms of penal satisfaction and propitiation, Wesley asserts the thoroughly objective character of the atonement, as the basis upon which the message of reconciliation is to be proclaimed.

However, Calvin and Baxter would agree that, for all its merits, Wesley's account of the gospel is inadequate, since it depends for its ultimate efficacy upon the will of man. Only the reality of election can ensure the efficacy of the atonement,

(140) See Neville B. Cryer, Biography of John Eliot, in Five Pioneer Missionaries (1965), pp.171f. Also The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, ed. J. M. Lloyd-Thomas (1931), p.xxvii.

(141) See George Smith, The Life of William Carey (1909), pp.20f.

notwithstanding the universally sufficient provision it contains. Whilst therefore Wesley's position is virtually identical with the reformers over the nature of the atonement, they would maintain that it is but half the picture. On the other hand, the reformers would agree with Owen on the application of the atonement, whilst dissenting from him over its nature and provision. In other words, both Owen and Wesley provide conflicting accounts of the atonement, only because they emphasise one aspect of the biblical teaching to the exclusion of the other. We have seen that Owen's view of common grace is inconsistent with his particularism, and also that Wesley's view of salvation requires something more than common grace. Had our two disputants pursued the dualistic view of grace seen in reformation theology, instead of falling victim to theological over-reaction, their respective conclusions would have virtually coincided.

It may therefore be suggested, that the solution advocated by Baxter and the 'moderate Calvinist' tradition has been largely vindicated. This is not to say that 'moderate Calvinist' expositions of the atonement have always been as coherent as they might have been. The terminology of the debate has not always been in the interests of clarity. Phrases like 'hypothetical universalism' and 'indefinite atonement' are cases in point.\* Even Baxter's use

**\*Note:** Arminianism shares with Amyraldianism the principle of 'hypothetical universalism', but, unlike the former, the Amyraldian certainly holds to a 'definite atonement'.

of the expression 'universal redemption' is liable to misunderstanding, until his dualistic conception is clearly grasped. Furthermore, whenever the 'Amyraldian' position is discussed by unsympathetic theologians, criticism is usually directed at the implied temporal sequence, and suggested element of 'after thought', in the distinction between an antecedent decree of conditional grace for all on one hand, and a subsequent decree of restricted, efficacious grace for the elect, on the other (142). Baxter himself is not guilty of this charge, since he agrees that 'all God's decrees are eternal without any order of time' (143), a point made also by R. L. Dabney when he wrote that 'The decree which determines so vast a multitude of parts is itself a unit. The whole all comprehending thought is one coetaneous intuition; the whole decree one act of will.' (144) In other words, Baxter's own formulation of the 'moderate Calvinist' thesis does not depend on the kind of terminology frequently employed by some of its advocates and critics. In the case of the Amyraldians, Baxter had formulated his own views before he made personal contact with them (145). His version is not always open to general anti-Amyraldian criticism (146).

(142) See B. B. Warfield, The Plan of Salvation (1966), p.94 and D. Macleod, Misunderstandings of Calvinism in BOT (February, 1968), p.19. Macleod is mistaken in attributing to Baxter the formula 'Christ died for me on condition that I believe.' A more accurate one is: 'Since Christ has died for me, my sins will be pardoned if I believe.' See UR, p.56.

(143) CT, Bk. 1, part 1, p.58.

(144) God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy in Discussions: Evangelical and Theological Vol. 1 (1967 rep.), p.296. Dabney's theology of the atonement is virtually indistinguishable from Baxter's, see op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.305f.

(145) See Aphorismes, p.319. On seeing Amyraut's Specimen Animadversionum in Exercitationes de Gratia Universale (1648), (a reply to the Exercitationes de Gratia Universale of Frederic Spanheim (1600-1649), Baxter thought it unnecessary to publish his treatise on universal redemption. However, this was published posthumously in 1694.



Berkhof's assessment of the Amyraldian position is inadequate. It obscures the fact that Amyraldianism was an attempt to synthesise the dualistic features of the biblical doctrine of grace, already detected by Calvin. By stating that the position was 'untenable' (147), Berkhof simply declares his strictly scholastic method. But this begs the question. This present study has shown that, given the biblical data, the position of Calvin and Baxter is difficult to refute, without resorting to strained exegesis and dubious philosophical distinctions. The fact remains that the divine provision of grace is more extensive than the number of its recipients.

The obvious objection to Baxter's via media would express the the dissatisfaction of both Owen and Wesley, viz, if the non-elect never receive efficacious grace, then what benefit can the death of Christ bring them? The very phrasing of the objection confuses the secret and revealed elements of the divine will (Deuteronomy 29:29). It prejudges the issue. Election relates to the former, and the gift of Christ to all relates to the latter. Human comprehension can only relate to the revealed, conditional will of God, the fact of paradox notwithstanding. However, faced with such paradox in Scripture, it is pure rationalism to affirm any aspect of the paradox at the expense of the other. In their different ways, both

(146) Amyraut was surely mistaken to suggest a conditional predestination for the non-elect. More recent moderate Calvinists have entertained serious inconsistencies in certain areas. For instance, Bellamy (op. cit., p.310) and Wardlaw (op. cit., p.452), contemplate the possible salvation of the non-elect, arguing that if the atonement is sufficient for all, then there is no deficiency of grace in respect of them. Surely this speculation labours in the face of self-contradiction. By definition there is no actual salvation for the non-elect. The discussion only possesses pastoral relevance in the case of those who anxiously believe they are non-elect. Such a belief cannot be verified either way, except by actual response to the gospel (II Peter 1:10). Therefore, the argument becomes: none need be perplexed if they are anxious to be saved, since a sufficient provision of grace has been made for all.

Owen and Wesley do this. Owen denies God's universal gracious will, and Wesley rejects election. One may also ask, why Christ wept over Jerusalem as he pronounced its forthcoming destruction, or why did God promise mercy to Israel, when he purposed to save only a remnant? Such questions are analogous to the eternal difficulty of reconciling human freedom and divine sovereignty. Paul's solution (Romans 9:19, 20, 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God?) will never satisfy the rationalist, but the Christian theologian will prefer to live with the difficulty rather than sacrifice any aspect of biblical paradox. In the face of the biblical evidence, Baxter endeavoured to affirm both halves of the paradox - God's special, secret, efficacious will and his universal, revealed, conditional will. It is precisely in this manner that Calvin sought to leave the paradox where he found it:

Seeing that in His Word God calls all alike to salvation, and this is the object of preaching, that all should take refuge in His faith and protection, it is right to say that He wishes all to gather to Him. Now the nature of the Word shows us that here (i.e. Matthew 23:37f) there is no description of the secret counsel of God (arcanum Dei consilium) - just His wishes. Certainly those whom He wishes effectively to gather, He draws inwardly by His Spirit, and calls them not merely by man's outward voice. If anyone objects that it is absurd to split God's will (duplicem in Deo voluntatem fingi), I answer that this is exactly our belief, that His will is one and undivided: but because our minds cannot plumb the profound depths of His secret election (ad profundam arcanae electionis abyssum) to suit our infirmity, the will of God is set before us as double (bifariam). (148)

(147) History of Christian Doctrines (1969 ed.), p.190.

(148) Comment, Matthew 23:37 (emphases mine). See John Howe, The Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls (1684) and also R. L. Dabney, God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy, op. cit., pp.282-313.

Even Richard Watson, who describes Baxter's position as 'mere verbiage' (149), may be asked: if God merely foreknows that some will only have preventing grace, as distinct from saving grace, then what possible benefit would the death of Christ be to them? In other words, the problem is one that is shared by all sides in the debate. Whatever disadvantages Baxter's scheme seems to possess, Owen's denial of a universal, gracious will in God, and Wesley's rejection of His special, electing will, can only be allowed at the expense of explicit biblical evidence. It now remains to consider the various features of the debate in the light of detailed exegesis of the relevant textual data.

(149) Op. cit., Vol. 2, p.421.

5: The Extent of the Atonement: the Biblical evidence.

When the Protestant reformers were challenged by Rome to vindicate their position, they appealed to Holy Scripture as their authority. The mediaeval church had claimed that Scripture was full of recondite truths, and that the 'magisterium' or teaching authority of the church was necessary to explain what was obscure. Only then could the faithful be rightly informed. Therefore, the reformers argued for the perspicuity of the Word of God. This was axiomatic, and a necessary correlate to the Protestant doctrine of the right of private judgement. Luther did not deny that many passages of Scripture were obscure to the undeclared (1), but he emphatically denies that anything is 'left obscure or ambiguous, but all that is in the Scripture is through the Word brought forth into the clearest light and proclaimed to the whole world.' (2) Thus the Reformed preacher's task was clearly defined. The contents of Scripture were to be made explicit by sound exegesis, and applied to the lives of the hearers.

The doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture could not long survive, as protestant unanimity began to dissipate. Whilst it is true that the Reformed Confessions of Faith show extensive agreement in the major doctrines of the faith, the controversies associated

(1) 'I certainly grant that many passages in the Scriptures are obscure and hard to elucidate, but that is due, not to the exalted nature of their subject, but to our own linguistic and grammatical ignorance; and it does not in any way prevent our knowing all the contents of Scripture.' The Bondage of the Will, tr. Packer and Johnson (1957), p.71.

(2) Ibid, p.74.

with Puritanism involved a review of the nature of biblical authority. With the advent of Arminianism, it soon had to be admitted that Scripture was not as perspicuous as it once appeared. Inevitably, scholasticism emerged within the reformed churches, with the virtual creation of a 'protestant magisterium'. The common church member needed the scholars to expound and defend the reformed faith. Such an attitude is very evident in John Owen's criticism of Thomas More, a lay theologian of East Anglia, whose Book, The Universality of Free Grace, partly occasioned Owen's treatise The Death of Death. In Owen's view, theological treatises should be left to those who possess the necessary expertise:

The truth is, for sense and expression in men who, from their manual trades, leap into the office of preaching and employment or writing, I know no reason why we should expect.  
(3)

Owen would not suffer fools gladly. He evidently despised those who appealed to the 'bare word' of Scripture, and whose hermeneutic principle was 'Away with the gloss and interpretation; give us leave to believe what the word expressly saith.' (4) On the other hand, Wesley - his academic background notwithstanding-- was in sympathy with such that Owen deplored. Not only was Wesley's own version of the direct appeal to Scripture a scholar's view, it had more affinity with Luther's doctrine of perspicuity than Owen's scholastic style and approach appeared to have (5). Was the

(3) DD, p.189.

(4) Ibid, p.303.

(5) Owen's style cannot claim perspicuity of expression. Packer draws attention to Owen's lumbering literary gait'. (Introduction to the Death of Death, p.25), a point also discussed by Toon (God's Statesman, p.177). Philip Doddridge was more generous: 'Owen's style resembles St. Paul's.' Lectures on Preaching, Works, Vol. 5, p.430.

extent of the atonement, therefore, a recondite truth, or was it as clear as the day? This was the principle at stake.

It was an obvious temptation for 'laymen' to undertake the exposition of Scripture, when the Hebrew and Greek scholars could not agree on a common exegesis. The English Bible (the A.V., 1611), itself the product of the best scholarship, was all that could be appealed to by the vast majority of Englishmen. If the scholars had performed their translation task competently, then the true understanding of the Gospel was within reach of all who were adequately skilled in their mother tongue. In this respect, Wesley - who was no enemy of sanctified scholarship - was on the side of the 'common man':

I now write, as I generally speak, ad populum, - to the bulk of mankind, to those who neither relish nor understand the art of speaking; but who, notwithstanding, are competent judges of those truths which are necessary to present and future happiness....I desire plain truth for plain people; therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations; from all perplexed and intricate reasonings; and, as far as possible, from even the show of learning, unless in sometimes citing the original Scripture. (6)

With regard to method, Owen and Wesley could not be more dissimilar. The puritan theologian was at once scholastic and technical, whilst the methodist evangelist showed little patience with systematic theology (7). (It is a fact of the greatest significance that Baxter possesses both an uncommon degree of

(6) Preface to the Sermons, Works, Vol. 5, p.1. Wesley expresses himself similarly in the Preface to his Notes on the New Testament (1754).

(7) I labour to avoid all words which are not easy to be understood, all which are not used in common life; and, in particular, those kinds of technical terms that so frequently occur in Bodies of Divinity; those modes of speaking which men of reading are intimately acquainted with, but which to common people are an unknown tongue. Notes, p.1.

scholastic dexterity and the art of popular communication. In these two respects, Baxter was arguably the equal of both Owen and Wesley.) Our concern, then, is to assess our two scholars, to compare Owen and Wesley's exegesis of those biblical texts which relate specifically to the extent of the atonement. With the chief theological arguments behind us, the particular theses advanced by our two theologians will be tested by the biblical data, according to the criterion of perspicuity. Our primary sources will be Owen's textual comments in his treatise, and Wesley's Notes on the New Testament. In keeping with the method of this study, Richard Baxter's Paraphrase on the New Testament (1685) will be appealed to for the 'middle-way' judgement. The temptation to consult the almost infinite range of commentators from varying schools of thought will be, on the whole, resisted, although Calvin is not to be ignored, in view of the fact that Owen's thought is regarded as having the same 'Calvinistic' pedigree as the reformer's. How truly 'Calvinistic' Owen is, is a point worth investigating, in view of the evidence adduced thus far that Owen's 'scholastic Calvinism' seems significantly different from its sixteenth century roots. Our two chief protagonists represent between them the spectrum of Anglo-Saxon evangelical protestantism. Baxter represents those theologians and commentators who have argued for the truth of

the via media.

It is clear thus far that the following schemes govern our thinkers' views on the extent of the atonement:

1. Owen: The Atonement is only sufficient and efficacious for the elect. (8)
2. Wesley: The Atonement is sufficient for all, and beneficial to believers.
3. Baxter: The Atonement is sufficient for all, but efficacious for the elect.

In surveying the textual data, two main categories will be employed (9). The first category includes those texts which seem to imply a more restricted view of the atonement, including also those assuming believers only to be the subjects of the statements in question. (10) The second category includes those texts which imply an unrestricted atonement. This second category will be further subdivided to cover (a) texts where 'all, all men, every man,' (b) texts where 'world, whole world,' and (c) texts where the possibility of believers perishing, are spoken of. (11)

#### I The evidence for a 'particular and restricted' atonement.

In the first gospel, the atoning death of Christ is described with reference to 'many' (Matthew 20:28, lutron anti pollon; 26:28, haima..pollon ekchunomenon). The particularist therefore argues that

- (8) Whilst Owen acknowledges the sufficiency/efficiency distinction, we have shown that his exposition of it demands the schematic statement given here.
- (9) The usual classification is followed. See Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p.392f; Watson, Theological Institutes, Vol. 2, p.281f; C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, p.544f; Wardlaw, Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, p.459f; Strong, Systematic Theology, p.421f.
- (10) Matthew 20:28; 26:28; John 10:11,15; 17:9; Acts 20:28; Romans 5:8; 8:32; Ephesians 5:25-27; Titus 2:14; I John 4:7-14.



Christ died for 'many' rather than for 'all'. Owen writes:

And though perhaps the word many itself be not sufficient to restrain the object of Christ's death unto some, in opposition to all, because many is sometimes placed absolutely for all, as Romans 5:19, yet these many being described in other places to be such as it is most certain all are not, so it is a full and evident restriction of it: for these many are the 'sheep' of Christ, John 10:15; ....and frequently, 'those who were given unto him of his Father,' John 17:2,6,9,11. (12)

Owen's exegesis is entirely consistent with his thesis that Christ provided a ransom sufficient for the elect alone. In which case many must be expounded as some, rather than all, in this instance. On the other hand, Wesley does not interpret many to mean all, as might be expected. The text evidently posed no problems for him, since the polus are 'As many as spring from Adam' (13). By implication, the 'many' relates to 'all men', but Wesley avoids being that explicit. Baxter's brief comment reflects his view that a universally sufficient provision has efficacy only for believers. The 'many' are those ransomed efficaciously. Christ therefore died as a ransom

For the Gentiles also or the world, to purchase and seal the universal Covenant of Grace, which giveth free pardon and life to all true believing accepters. (14)

Owen is possibly ill at ease with evidence which supports a prima facie case for an alternative view. Wesley discreetly avoids the issue, and it is left to Baxter to provide a solution which, in fact, neither Owen nor Wesley could quarrel with. Baxter's solution

- (11) (a) Romans 5:18,19; I Corinthians 15:22; II Corinthians 5:14,15; I Timothy 2:4,6; 4:10; Titus 2:11,12; Hebrews 2:9; II Peter 3:9.  
(b) John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:51; II Corinthians 5:19; I John 2:2.  
(c) Romans 14:15,20; I Corinthians 8:11; II Peter 2:1.

(12) DD, p.214.

(13) Wesley is supported by Calvin here. 'Many' is used, not for a definite number, but for a large number, in that he sets Himself over against all others. And this is its meaning also in Romans 5:15 where Paul is not talking of a part of mankind but of the whole human race.' Comment, Matthew 20:28. 'The word many does not mean a part of the world only, but the whole human race....' Comment, Mark 14:24.

is arguably more satisfactory than Calvin's, (see note 13), since he avoids any verbal alterations. This much is plain: Christ is not said to 'shed his blood for the elect alone, but for 'many'. Whilst Wesley's comments on the texts are inadequate, Owen fails to demonstrate his position from them. He could only have done so had the text explicitly said 'elect' or 'some' rather than 'many'.

Owen cites the parable of the good shepherd (John 10) in support of a limited atonement. 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep....I lay down my life for the sheep.' (vs. 11,15) Owen's remarks are emphatic. This passage is 'sufficient to evert the general ransom':

That all men are not the sheep of Christ is most apparent....The distinction at the last day will make it evident, when the sheep and the goats shall be separated ....That the sheep here mentioned are all his elect.... That Christ so says that he laid down his life for his sheep, that plainly he excludes all others.... (15)

Wesley's thoughts on these key statements are conspicuous by their absence. However, he makes a relevant comment on v.18 'but I lay it down of myself', by paraphrasing Christ's words as follows:

I have an original power and right of myself, both to lay it down as a ransom, and to take it again after full satisfaction is made for the sins of the whole world. (16)

Once again, it is to be noted that Wesley expresses himself

(14) Paraphrase on Matthew 26:28. The Baxterian commentator Matthew Henry writes accordingly. 'It was a ransom for many, sufficient for all, effectual for many.' 'The blood of the Old Testament was shed for a few....The atonement was made only for the children of Israel (Leviticus 16:34): but Jesus Christ is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, I John 2:2.' An Exposition of the Old and New Testament (1721), (1886 ed.), Vol. 7, pp.292,392. Henry's biographer J. B. Williams labours unconvincingly to affirm that 'Mr. Henry.... was not a Baxterian.' Memoir of the Life, Character, and Writings of the Rev. Matthew Henry (1828), 1974 rep. p.242. The above quotations are typical, and serve to refute Williams' case.

(15) DD, p.292.

(16) Notes, on John 10:18.

in the language of the Prayer Book, Homilies and Articles, in stark contrast to Owen's insistence that the sheep are the elect. Whether Wesley is justified in attempting to introduce a universal dimension into the passage is highly doubtful. In this respect, Calvin himself has no doubts that by 'sheep', 'Christ' simply means ....all God's elect' (17). However, the atmosphere' of Calvin's exposition is very different from Owen's, since he refuses to allow the doctrine of election to paralyse the church in its evangelistic responsibilities:

It is no small consolation to godly teachers that, although the larger part of the world does not listen to Christ, He has His sheep whom He knows and by whom He is also known. They must do their utmost to bring the whole world into Christ's fold, but when they do not succeed as they would wish, they must be satisfied with the single thought that those who are sheep will be collected together by their work. (18)

As Wesley has done, Calvin has introduced a universal dimension into the exegesis, not because the context strictly demands it, but because of his broader view of the atonement viz, it is sufficient for all/ efficient for the elect. Calvin would therefore not quarrel with Wesley's statement as it stands, but he would argue that Wesley fails to come to terms with the particularism implied by election. Baxter is far less explicit than Calvin, but the same dualistic understanding of the atonement is obviously implied in Baxter's notes on John 10:15:

(17) Comment, John 10:8.

(18) Comment, John 10:27 (emphasis mine).

As my Father knoweth me with love and I know the Father, so with a special love I lay down my life for their (i.e. the sheep) redemption and salvation. (19)

In line with Reformation Calvinism, Baxter distinguishes between a 'general love' for all men and a 'special love' for the elect. Like Calvin, Baxter interprets John 10:26 (But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep) with reference to election (20), but, unlike Owen, Baxter's broader view of the atonement would not prevent either himself or Calvin from adopting the lines of Charles Wesley:

O for a trumpet voice,  
On all the world to call!  
To bid their hearts rejoice  
In Him died for all;  
For all my Lord was crucified,  
For all, for all, my Saviour died! (21)

Notwithstanding the implied reference to election in John 10:26, there is an alternative interpretation of the parable which eliminates the need to introduce a discussion about the extent of the atonement altogether. Since Christ directed the parable at those elders of the synagogue who ejected the blind man whose sight he had restored (John 9:34), the qualifications of the 'self-appointed' shepherds of Israel were clearly being called into question. Christ, the good shepherd takes care of his sheep, unlike the elders. The good shepherd would never 'eject' his own. On the contrary, he is willing to

(19) Paraphrase, John 10:15.

(20) But no wonder that you believe not me; for you are not my chosen flock, nor qualified to believe: Were you my sheep you would understand, believe, and obey my Word. Paraphrase, Ibid.

(21) MHB (1933), 114, v.7. Baxter's distinction between conditional reprobation and unconditional election (see CT, Bk. 1, p.68), would enable him to concur with Wesley's comment on John 10:26, 'Ye are not of my sheep' - Because ye do not, will not, follow me, because ye are proud, unholy, etc.'

die for them. This perfectly natural understanding of John 9 and 10 eliminates the dispute about the extent of the atonement totally. It acknowledges that in 10:11 and 15, Christ is highlighting the quality of his love when compared with the 'care' of the elders. He is not concerned to specify the extent of its eventual application. The stress of the two statements must be transferred from the 'sheep' to the 'life' of the shepherd. Owen's view demands the following paraphrase:

'The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep, not for the goats....I lay down my life for the elect, not for anyone else.'

An alternative paraphrase is therefore:

'Unlike those false shepherds who are governed by considerations of gain at the sheep's expense, I, the good shepherd, am prepared to lay down my life for them, to expose myself to the greatest danger for their protection and welfare.' (22)

Owen is surely incorrect to interpret one parable by another, i.e. the parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31f), and the parable of the good shepherd are quite different in purpose. Furthermore, the doctrine of election is more incidental in the latter parable than Owen allows, where Christ is emphasising both the quality of his care, and his willingness to save any who wish to become his sheep (v.9, If any man enter in....)

The same principle arises in connection with Ephesians 5:25,

- (22) See Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology (1981), p.612. 'The divine care for the believing community is contrasted with the careless attitude of strange shepherds.' Baxter anticipates this view: 'As he that keeps the sheep not as a hireling, but as his own will venture himself to defend them from thieves and wolves; so I will lay down my life for my sheep.' Paraphrase on John 10:11.

'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.' In Owen's view, the analogy employed by Paul limits a man's love to his wife, since Christ loves the church exclusively:

And if Christ had a love to others so as to die for them, then is there in the exhortation a latitude left unto men, in conjugal affections, for other women besides their wives. (23)

Owen's exegesis implies the following paraphrase: 'Husbands, love your wives, and no other women, as Christ only loved the church. Promiscuous affection should be as foreign in a husband as it is in Christ.' Owen's view is perfectly arguable, if Paul's concern is to discourage sexual promiscuity. However, the Apostle, whilst he does discuss this, seems to have dealt with the matter earlier in the chapter, vs.3-5. In the statement in question, v.25, Paul appears to be stressing the quality of a husband's love, rather than the number of women to whom it should be restricted. An alternative paraphrase is therefore demanded:

Husbands, love your wives with the same kind of sacrificial love with which Christ loves His church. As he was prepared to die for us, so you should be willing, if necessary, to shed your blood for your wives.

In other words, Owen can only employ Ephesians 5:25 as a proof text for limited atonement, if Paul is asserting that in no sense does Christ love any but his church. This is arguable,

(23) DD, p.294.

but not conclusively so, in the absence of such a qualification.

It is as a qualitative statement that Wesley obviously regards

Paul's words:

Here is the true model of conjugal affection. With this kind of affection, with this degree of it, and to this end, should husbands love their wives. (24)

In order to avoid any particularistic implications, Baxter invokes the special love / general love distinction. Paul then means to say:

Husbands, imitate Christ, in loving your wives, as Christ did his Church, for which (in a special sense) he gave himself by death, .... (25)

Closely related to Ephesians 5:25 is Paul's statement in Acts 20:28 where he exhorts the overseers of the Ephesian church to 'feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood'. That this is a 'particularist' statement is clear and Owen employs it accordingly:

We deny any such general mediation.... in Christ, as should extend itself beyond his church or chosen. It was his 'church' which he 'redeemed with his own blood', Acts 20:28; his 'church' that 'he loved and gave himself for it....', Ephesians 5:25-27. They were his 'sheep' he 'laid down his life for', John 10:15.... (26)

Acts 20:28 poses no problems for Wesley. He would not quarrel with the view that Christ has died for 'the believing, loving, holy children of God' (27), but he rejects the negative implication made by Owen. We have already noted the challenge

(24) Notes on Ephesians 5:25.

(25) Paraphrase on Ephesians 5:25. Likewise in Calvin, there is a total absence of Owen's type of exegesis. 'Let husbands imitate Christ in this respect, that he did not hesitate to die for the church.' Comment, Ephesians 5:25.

(26) DD, p.189. Owen also uses this text to demonstrate the deity of Christ, see Works, Vol. 2, p.416 and Vol. 12, p.216f.

(27) Notes, Acts 20:28.

issued by Wesley to particularists to show the 'scriptures wherein God declares in equally express terms....' Christ did not die 'for all'....You know there are none.' (28) It is on these grounds that Arminianism will always have a prima facie case, when compared with High Calvinism. For the same reason, Baxter was concerned to state vis-a-vis the Arminians that 'Christ died for all, but not for all alike or equally' (29), since they ignore the the discriminating purposes of God. However, vis-a-vis High Calvinists, Baxter is equally insistent that

When God saith so expressly that Christ died for all, and tasted death for every man, and is the ransom for all, and the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, it beseems every Christian rather to explain in what sense Christ died for all men, than flatly to deny it. (30)

Consistent with this statement, Baxter expounds Acts 20:28 by saying that 'Christ's blood hath purchased the church in a fuller sense than he is said to die for all.' (31)

Baxter's concern to provide a formula which harmonises the evidence can be readily appreciated. But whilst this study tends to confirm his evaluation of the problems involved, some of his terminology is not beyond improvement. In the light of his acquiescence in the Reformation distinction between an atonement sufficient for all/ efficient for the elect, his formula 'Christ died for all, but not for all equally' is open to criticism. If the atonement is

(28) Works, Vol. 10, p.217.

(29) EC, p.160.

(30) UR, p.286 and preface.

(31) Paraphrase on Acts 20:28. Calvin strongly argues that lack of pastoral vigilance would make the Ephesian elders 'accountable for lost souls' and 'guilty of sacrilege, because they have profaned the sacred blood of the Son of God, and have made useless the redemption acquired by Him'. Comment, Acts 20:28. Calvin could only say this intelligibly from his standpoint of a universal redemption.



sufficient for all, then there must be an equality of provision for all. The 'inequality' relates to the divinely purposed efficacy of the atonement, not the universal provision, and these are distinct issues. The term 'equality' is really inappropriate for what Baxter intends to say. It is more coherent and straightforward simply to say that Christ died for all sufficiently, but for the elect efficaciously, thus retaining the unambiguous Reformation formula.

Owen cites John 17:9 as further evidence of the restricted nature of the atonement. He denies that there is 'one word of this general mediation for all':

Nay, if you will hear himself, he denies in plain terms to mediate for all: 'I pray not,' saith he, 'for the world, but for them which thou hast given me,' John 17:9. (32)

This statement is part of Owen's argument that the oblation and mediation of Christ are co-extensive. Since therefore he does not pray for all, it is fallacious to assert that he died for all. This matter was alluded to in chapter one, in connection with R. T. Kendall's claim that Calvin held to an unlimited atonement but a limited intercession (33). As was pointed out then, Kendall is mistaken. In fact, like Owen, Calvin treats Christ's death and intercession as inseparable, but in a significantly different manner from Owen. Calvin's dualistic view of the atonement gives

(32) DD, pp.190,294.

(33) Op. cit., p.13-14.

rise to a corresponding dualism with respect to Christ's intercession. The prayer on the cross ('Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.' Luke 23:34), therefore complements the high priestly intercession of John 17, where the elect in all ages are prayed for. Owen gives a contradictory account of the former prayer. On one hand he limits the prayer to those among the crucifixion party, and on the other, he suggests that it was an 'effectual supplication' for Jews later converted after Pentecost (34). Calvin's statement not only refutes Kendall's interpretation of him, it also gives a more satisfactory account of the evidence than Owen provides:

He openly declares that He does not pray for the world (i.e. in John 17:9), for he is solicitous only for His own flock which He received from the Father's hand. But this might seem absurd; for no better rule of prayer can be found than to follow Christ as our Guide and Teacher. But we are commanded to pray for all, and Christ himself afterwards prayed for all indiscriminately, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' I reply, the prayers which we utter for all are still limited to God's elect. We ought to pray that this and that and every man may be saved and so embrace the whole human race, because we cannot yet distinguish the elect from the reprobate. (35)

This remarkable statement illustrates at once not only the biblical balance of Reformation Calvinism, but also the theological 'gap' between Calvin's Calvinism and Owen's High Calvinism. As it

(34) 'Christ in those words doth not so much as pray for those men that they might believe....' DD, p.195. 'It seems to me that this supplication was effectual and successful, that the Son was heard in this request also, faith and forgiveness being granted to them for whom he prayed.' Ibid, p.196. (emphases mine) The same confusion appears in the puritan Thomas Manton (1620-1677). See his Exposition of John Seventeen (1959 rep.), p.138. Like Owen, Manton argues for a 'two-fold praying in our Saviour', distinguishing between his prayer as 'mediator' and his prayer as a 'private person'. This is highly debatable. Was Christ's prayer on the cross that of a 'private person', at the same time his sufferings were mediatorial?

(35) Comment, John 17:9. See also Calvin, Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy, tr. T. H. L. Parker (1956), p.143.

stands, Wesley's exegesis of John 17:9 would not invoke Calvin's disapproval:

I pray not for the world - Not in these petitions, which are adapted to the state of believers only. He prays for the world at the twenty-first and twenty-third verses - that they may believe, that they may know God hath sent Him. This no more proves that our Lord did not pray for the world, both before and afterward, than His praying for the apostles alone (v.6-19) proves that He did not pray for 'them also which shall believe through their word'. (v.20) (36)

It is an arguable, though predictable, deficiency in Wesley that the theme of election so evident in John 17 is 'supressed', if not specifically eliminated. As Owen over-stresses the aspect of election, so Wesley over-stresses the universal features of the chapter. Like Calvin, Baxter expounds John 17:9 with due regard to both truths:

It is out of special love to them, for the salvation and welfare of these, that I now pray to Thee, and not for the mere worldlings and enemies of thy kingdom, (though for them also I have such desires and prayers as signify my common love; and the elect among them yet unconverted, I have such requests for, as are suited to their state). But these that thou hast given me peremptorily to save, are the people of thy peculiar love as well as mine. (37)

Baxter, whilst he is anxious to vindicate the doctrine of divine election in human salvation, is equally anxious to prevent logical inference from giving a one-sided picture of the biblical gospel. The particularist inferences drawn by Owen from John 17:9 are given no room to manoeuvre by Baxter, who considered the text

(36) Notes on John 17:9.

(37) Paraphrase on John 17:9.

more thoroughly in his Catholick Theologie:

But where doth the text say, that Christ never prayed for any but the elect? Yea, or that he prayed not at all for the world, though he put not up that particular prayer for the world? Look on the text, and you will see that he speaketh there only of the disciples that followed him on earth; And that he prayed not in that petition for all his elect only; And therefore he addeth, v.20, Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word. And what was the prayer? (That they may be one, and kept from the evil of the world.) which is a blessing peculiar to his disciples. But it is manifest, that Christ had other prayers for the world, even for many ungodly men; yea, for reprobates. For, 1. On the cross, he prayeth for his persecutors, Father forgive them: And it is mens own invention to say that he meaneth none but the elect: We must not unnecessarily limit where the word limiteth not. And Stephen made Christ his pattern. And it is gross fiction to say that Stephen prayed for none but the elect. (38)

The particularist thesis claims support from those texts where believers only are the subjects of the statements in question, e.g. Romans 5:8; 8:32; Titus 2:14; I John 4:7-14. Owen is very insistent in his remarks. Linking Titus 2:14 (He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us....) with Ephesians 5:25, he asks:

What did Christ do? 'He gave himself,' say both these places alike: 'For his church,' saith one; 'For us,' saith the other; both words of equal extent and force, as all men know....I ask now, Are all men of this church? Are all in that rank of men among whom Paul placeth himself and Titus? Are all purged, purified, sanctified and made glorious, brought nigh unto Christ? or doth Christ fail in his aim towards the greatest part of men? (39)

Of Romans 5:8 (God commendeth his love towards us, in that,

(38) CT, Bk. 2, p.68.

(39) DD, p.210.

while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us) and I John 4:9-10 (...Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins), Owen says:

In both which places the eminency of this love is set forth exceedingly emphatically to believers, with such expressions as can no way be accomodated to a natural velleity to the good of all. (40)

Of Romans 8:31-33 (If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, .... Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?), Owen concludes:

Now, if God sent his Son to die for all, he had (done) as great an act of love, and hath made as great a manifestation of it, to them that perish as to those that are saved. (41)

In short, there is no sense in which it can be said that Christ has made provision for any besides that elect. The atonement - in design, provision and application, is strictly limited and particular. Notwithstanding the strength of Owen's reasoning, his case would only be conclusive were the passages he cites accompanied by an explicitly 'negative' statement. But as Wesley says with no fear of contradiction, 'You know there are none.' (42) It is obvious from his notes on Romans 5:8, Titus 2:14 and I John 4:9-10, that these verses present no difficulties to Wesley. His Arminianism still stresses 'salvation by faith alone', in which case, the

(40) DD, p.324.

(41) Ibid, p.293.

(42) Works, Vol. 10, p.217.

verses in question are simply stating the obvious, viz, believers alone partake of the benefits of an atonement available for all. However, Romans 8:32, by virtue of the wider context - and the reference to predestination in particular, is not dealt with quite so easily.

Wesley was obviously aware of the logical connection between those who are 'called', 'foreknown' and 'predestinated' and the 'us' for whom Christ was 'not spared', in Romans 8:28f. (Owen is surely correct to restrict the 'all' of v.32 to the 'called' and 'predestinated' ones of vs.28, 29, but this does not prove Owen's negative thesis, for reasons given above.) However, Wesley could only cite Romans 8:32 as a proof text for universal atonement by re-assessing the predestinarian assumptions of the passage. This he does by saying that

St. Paul does not affirm, either here or in any other part of his writings, that precisely the same number of men are called, justified and glorified. He does not deny that a believer may fall away and be cut off between his special calling and his glorification (Romans 11:22). Neither does he deny that many are called who never are justified. He only affirms that this is the method whereby God leads us step by step toward heaven. (43)

Wesley argues in the same manner in his sermon on Predestination (44). The verses in question only speak of the 'process' of God's work of salvation, not of any predetermined number of

(43) Notes, Romans 8:30 (emphasis mine).

(44) '....the Apostle is not here (as many have supposed) describing a chain of causes and effects; (this does not seem to have entered into his heart;) but simply showing the method in which God works; the order in which the several branches of salvation constantly follow each other.' Works, Vol. 6, p.212.

'persons'. In true Arminian style, Wesley says the 'decree' of God relates not to individuals as such, but the method by which any who believe are finally saved (45). In other words, the individuals spoken of by Paul in vs.28, 29 are a hypothetical number. If any believe, then the 'several branches of salvation' viz, predestination, calling, justification, etc., find application in their cases. Thus, in Wesley's view, the 'all' of v.32 comprehends 'all men', since 'all' may partake of salvation. (46)

To strengthen his argument, Wesley actually alters the A.V.translation of Romans 8:29. Where the A.V. reads 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son....', Wesley's alteration reads 'For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated conformable to the image of his Son....' (47) Such a reading is clearly in Wesley's interests, although the grammatical sense is doubtful. 'All' are 'conformable', if not 'conformed' to the image of God's Son. The divine decree relates to the 'pattern', not to any fixed number of 'persons' who may be conformed to it. Wesley therefore eliminates the idea that, in the last analysis, it is God rather than man who guarantees the success of the salvation process. If God makes men 'conformable' to Christ, men finally determine whether they are 'conformed'. In his treatment, Wesley simply up-ends the text, turning a statement about

(45) '....his fixed decree, that believers shall be saved.' Ibid, p.213.

(46) For a thorough discussion of Wesley's doctrine of predestination, see A. Coppedge, John Wesley and the Doctrine of Predestination, (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1976).

(47) Wesley probably follows Philip Doddridge here, whose Family Expositor (1738) was used in the compiling of Wesley's Notes on the New Testament (1754). See the reference to Doddridge (in the Preface) who, unlike Wesley still writes of God's decree 'to raise a part of our fallen and miserable race' in Calvinist rather than Arminian fashion. See Works, Vol. 8, p.464f. Whatever reasons Doddridge had for rendering summorphos as 'conformable' rather than 'conformed', Wesley arguably had other reasons for doing so.

God's election into a statement about man's fitness. This is the crucial difference between Calvinism and Arminianism.

Whilst the theological potential of Wesley's alternative English rendering is obvious, he cannot find support in the original. The A.V. translators rendered the verb summorphoumenos as 'made conformable' in Philippians 3:10, but they rendered the adjective summorphos as 'conformed' in Romans 8:29 (48), Wesley therefore confuses the passive verb form with the adjective. Paul intended to say in Philippians 3:10, that he was 'becoming conformed' to Christ's death, but he clearly intended his readers to understand that the elect are (eventually) 'conformed', according to God's sovereign purpose and grace. Whilst Paul never stressed divine sovereignty to the exclusion of human activity (see Philippians 2: 12, 13), he does seem concerned to stress the ultimate certainty of the divine purpose in Romans 8:28f as a feature of the Christian's assurance.

Whatever are the weaknesses of Wesley's exegesis, Owen's case is not thereby proven. The apostle's words do not include the kind of negative statement which would be necessary to demonstrate Owen's case. It seems natural, however, to equate the 'all' of Romans 8: 32 with the 'predestined' of Romans 8:29, and Calvin himself expounds the passage accordingly (49). He also views predestination

(48) See Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1964), p.786. Sanday and Headlam reject Origen's view which makes 'the foreknowledge a foreknowledge of character and fitness', but they are even less inclined to a Calvinistic interpretation. The Epistle to the Romans (1898), (International Critical Commentary), p.217.

(49) Comment, Romans 8:29 and 32.



in a necessitarian manner (50). However, as in his view of Titus 2:14 (51), Baxter, who has no problems with predestination (52), still allows for any slight ambiguity in Paul's expression in Romans 8:32:

He that spared not his own Son, not thinking him too precious a gift, but delivered him up to suffer as a sacrifice to procure the pardon of sin and salvation, to be given to all by a conditional covenant, of faith and acceptance, and actually to pardon and save all true believers, that accept him.... (53)

It is clear then, that, in the absence of any explicit evidence, Owen cannot employ the 'restrictive' verses as proof of a strictly limited atonement. Nowhere does the New Testament affirm that the atonement contained no provision for the lost. Such would be necessary for Owen conclusively <sup>to</sup> demonstrate his position. His view is inferential rather than biblical. With the possible exception of the Romans 8 passage, Wesley can cite the 'restrictive' texts as evidence of the obvious: of course Christ died for believers. They alone partake of the benefits of an otherwise general provision. Baxter's position - that Christ died sufficiently for all, yet efficaciously for the elect - is the least embarrassed of the three positions. He alone seems able to account for the evidence, without denying either divine election or a universal provision of grace. Thus far, Baxter's exegesis seems to satisfy the

(50) There is a 'chain of necessity'. Comment, Romans 8:28. See Institutes III:23:8.

(51) 'The redeemed of Christ 'not only as to sufficiency, but efficacy)....are a purified and peculiar people....' Paraphrase, Titus 2:14 (emphasis mine).

(52) 'St Paul tells us, that those whom God purposeth or decreetn to save, he predestinateth to be 'conformed to the image of his Son, even to the means, as well as to the end....That this chain of causes is all decreed of God, from the first to the last; ....' Baxter safeguards his doctrine from the abuses of antinomianism and double predestination: 'To say that God doth predestinate men to salvation, and not to holiness of heart and life, is to contradict God's doctrine of predestination.' 'but the apostle tells us of no such decrees of the causes of men's

the criterion of perspicuity.

## II The evidence for a general and unrestricted view

A. In this section, our concern will be with those texts involving the expressions 'all', 'all men', and 'every man' (54). The Arminian school has always regarded the naked statements of Scripture as the primary strength of its cause. So long as the appeal to direct biblical evidence is made, the universalist position is in no way threatened. However, this is not how Owen saw the matter. It is worth noting that his generally calm and dispassionate style seems to escape him as he directs a vehement challenge to his antagonists:

Upon these expressions hangs the whole weight of the opposite cause, the chief if not the only argument for the universality of redemption being taken from words which seem to be of latitude in their signification equal to such an assertion, as the world, the whole world, all, and the like; which terms, when they have once fastened upon, they run with 'Io triumphe', as though the victory were surely theirs. The world, the whole world, all, all men! - who can oppose it? Call them to the context, in the several places where the words are; appeal to rules of interpretation; mind them of the circumstances and scope of the place, the sense of the same words in other places; ...they presently cry out, the bare word, the letter is theirs: 'Away with the gloss and interpretation; give us leave to believe what the word expressly saith; '...Let them, then, as long as they please, continue such empty clamours, fit to terrify and shake weak and unstable men; for the truth's sake, we will not be silent: and I hope we shall easily make it appear that the general terms that are used in this business will indeed give no colour to any argument for universal redemption, whether absolute or conditionate. (55)

(52) continued/ damnation....So that election and non-election, or reprobation, are not of the same kind, degree, and order. Paraphrase (Annotations on Romans 8). In the latter respect, Baxter 'softens' the doctrine of Calvin.

(53) Paraphrase

(54) Romans 5:18,19; I Corinthians 15:22, II Corinthians 5:14,15; I Timothy 2:4,6; 4:10; Titus 2:11,12; Hebrews 2:9; II Peter 3:9.

(55) DD, pp.302-303.

This extended quotation is important for a number of reasons. Owen is clearly aware of the task facing him. The acceptance of his major thesis depends upon a convincing account of the universal terms in question. Also, his remarks are a direct challenge to Luther's doctrine of perspicuity, unless he can demonstrate in equally clear terms that Scripture means something other than what it actually says. Owen regards Scholarly exegesis to be clearly indispensable for a right reading of the Bible, which, in the layman's hands, can be deceiving. He is anxious therefore to refute not only Arminianism proper, but also the 'conditionate' scheme of Amyraldus.

It is very evident in Owen's exegesis that his fundamental scheme of redemption is functioning as an a priori principle, i.e. since, in his view, the atonement was designed to be sufficient and efficacious for the elect alone, he is committed to placing a restrictive understanding on all the universal texts. Put simply, he is obliged to prove that 'all' means 'some'. This is arguably deductive scholasticism, and not inductive biblicism. It is his method of exegesis that constrains Owen to state:

That it is nowhere affirmed in the Scripture that Christ died for all men, or gave himself a ransom for all men much less for all and every man, we have before declared. That he 'gave himself a ransom for all' is expressly declared, I Timothy 2:6. But now, who this all should be, whether all believers, or all the elect, or some of all sorts, or all of every sort, is in debate. (56)

(56) Ibid, p.307.

Owen suggests that 'all' must mean either 'collectively for all in general', or 'distributively for some of all sorts, excluding none'. Although he does not deny that the first sense applies in some instances, he argues that 'in the business of redemption', the latter case usually applies. John 12:32 is cited amongst others to prove the point. 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' After pointing out that 'men' is not in the original, but only pantas, Owen rejects the idea that Christ will draw all men collectively to himself. 'All, then can here be no other than many, some of all sorts, no sort excluded' according to Revelation 5:9 'Thou hast redeemed us out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.' There can be little doubt that Owen is correct here, especially in view of the request by some Greeks to see Christ, described earlier in the chapter (v.20). In this respect, Wesley does not contest Owen's exegesis. 'All men' means 'Gentiles as well as Jews.' (57) Owen then concludes that in matters relating to redemption, 'all' must either mean 'all of some sorts' or 'some of all sorts'. Therefore, 'all distributively' must mean 'some absolutely', and never 'all collectively'.

Most of the instances cited by Owen, including the John 12:32 verse are, to a degree, rather obvious. Considerations of the context make the interpretation plain. The contesting theologies are

(57) Notes on John 12:32.

not in dispute here. The point at issue is whether Owen is correct to view 'all' in such a light in every instance where redemption is the subject matter. For example, he cites Romans 5:18 ('The free gift came upon all men to justification of life') as an example of 'all' meaning 'all of some sorts'. (58) The virtually synonymous use of 'all' and 'many' in Romans 5:15f has already been noted (see note 13), but, bearing in mind the evidence there, it must surely be asked here if Owen's point is as self-evident in the case of Romans 5:15f as it is in John 12:32?

Wesley obviously disagrees with Owen when he interprets the 'gift of righteousness' as having been purchased for 'all men'. He does not deny that only those who believe actually partake of the gift of salvation, but he insists that the 'purchase' is available for 'all men'. (59) It was also noted earlier that Wesley has the support of Calvin, whose exegesis of Romans 5:18 (60) is very different from Owen's. Calvin evidently means 'all promiscuously' and not just 'all distributively', a view reflected in Baxter's comment on the same verse:

Therefore, as by the offence of one the sentence of death was passed upon all his posterity; so also by the righteousness of one, as the meritorious and procuring cause, the free gift came on all men, for justification and life: That is, a free gift is made and offered promiscuously to all, on condition of believing, suitable acceptance, and actually justifieth all to life, who so believingly accept it, and unthankfully reject it not. (61)

(58) DD, p.309.

(59) Notes on Romans 5:15f.

(60) 'Paul makes grace common to all men, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is offered to all. Although Christ suffered for the sins of the world, and is offered by the goodness of God without distinction to all men, yet not all receive him.' Comment, Romans 5:18.

(61) Paraphrase.

Paul's statement in I Timothy 2 is cited by Owen as an example where 'all' must mean 'some of all sorts'. Since Paul is urging Christians to pray for all men, including kings and others in authority, the argument is that 'Christ gave himself a ransom for all classes of men' (v.6), the rulers as well as the ruled, etc - all distributively, not all promiscuously. Christ's death is therefore a ransom for 'all sorts of men', not all collectively. (62) In other words, God has his elect within every rank of society, and the ransom has been paid in the atonement only for the elect. This is the consideration governing Owen's view; he does not even allow the idea of a sufficient ransom for all collectively, a point we have discussed earlier. There is a total absence of this kind of discussion in Wesley's Notes. Indeed, this passage is perhaps the most explicit evidence for his universalism:

1. We may likewise give thanks for all men in the full sense of the word, for that God 'willeth all men to be saved', and Christ is the Mediator of all....It is strange that any whom He has actually saved should doubt the universality of His grace!

4. Who willeth seriously all men - Not a part only, much less the smallest part. To be saved - Eternally.

6. Who gave himself a ransom for all - Such a ransom, the word signifies, wherein a like or equal is given; ....and this ransom, from the dignity of the person redeeming, was more than equivalent to all mankind. (63)

(62) DD, p.344. Contrary to the findings of this study so far, Owen has the support of Calvin in this instance. 'The universal term 'all' must always be referred to classes of men but never to individuals. It is as if he had said, Not only Jews, but also Greeks, not only for people of humble rank, but also princes have been redeemed by the death of Christ.' Comment, I Timothy 2:5. As was argued in chapter 1, this is not Calvin's usual exegesis of universal terms, although he believes the exegesis given of 'all' in I Timothy 2 applies in this instance. Many references can be cited in Calvin to prove his use of 'all' to mean 'all promiscuously' or indiscriminately, e.g. the quote given earlier on John 17:9. See M. Charles Bell, Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement, EQ, April, 1983, p.119.

Wesley understands Paul to be advocating a straightforward, unambiguous universalism. If Paul's language is ambiguous, then Wesley clearly exploits any ambiguity to the full. It must be admitted that Paul's use of 'all' does possess a degree of ambiguity. Quite apart from Owen's view of a limited ransom theory, there are other grounds for arguing as he does. The source of the ambiguity seems to be in vs.1 and 2. Owen seems to assume that Paul is saying 'Pray for all men, i.e. kings as well as commoners, those in authority as well as those in subjection.' If this is what Paul means, then 'all' arguably means 'all sorts of men'. However, there is an alternative sense to his words: 'Pray for all men everywhere, including kings and those in authority.' In the first reading, 'all men promiscuously' cannot be understood, but in the second reading, 'the promiscuous all' can imply and embrace the 'distributive all' without any logical inconsistency. If Paul's words do possess any ambiguity, it is obvious that any commentator will be governed in his exegesis by his theory of the atonement. Owen cannot, a priori, allow the 'promiscuous all', any more than Wesley can allow such a conception to be explained away. The point to be emphasised here is that Owen's argument cannot be conclusively demonstrated unless (a) Scripture teaches a restricted ransom and (b) Paul is to be read as Owen understands him.

(63) Notes on I Timothy 2:1-6.

Since Owen fails to prove (a), and (b) is debateable, Baxter's position appears more satisfactory:

It is not only all sorts of men that Christ would have to be saved; but he willeth the salvation of all men in general, so far as to make a sacrifice sufficient for all, if all will believe; and to make an Act of oblivion, or general pardon, and gift of life to all, on condition of acceptance; and to send his messengers promiscuously to all, with the Word of reconciliation. What Christ giveth to all, he willeth and purchased for all: But he giveth to all a pardon, and right to life, on condition of acceptance: therefore he is so far willing of their salvation. (64)

Baxter's solution reconciles the apparently conflicting phrases 'ransom for many' (Matthew 20:28) and 'ransom for all' (I Timothy 2:6). The former relates to the efficacy of the atonement (as Isaiah 53:11,12 would imply, where 'many' rendered as 'all' raises further difficulties), whilst the latter relates to its general sufficiency. The two texts would only be in conflict if the first was explicitly restrictive. Had this been the case, then consistency would have demanded Owen's type of exegesis of I Timothy 2:4-6. It is perfectly arguable to assert, as Baxter clearly implies, that the atonement has reference to all classes of men, only because it has reference to all men indiscriminately. The former logically depends upon the latter, and is included or embraced by it. Paul is possibly discouraging a 'ghetto-like, them-and-us' attitude, on the part of Christians being persecuted by the authorities, an idea suggested by Calvin (65). Paul seems

(64) Paraphrase on I Timothy 2:4. F. F. Bruce writes, 'When Scripture says all in a context like this, it means all!' Answers to Questions in The Harvester, January, 1966, p.10.

(65) 'He bids solemn prayers be made for kings and princes in authority. Because in that age there were so many dangerous enemies of the church, to prevent despair from hindering application to prayer, Paul anticipates their difficulties, declaring that God wills all men to be saved.' Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, p.109.



to be saying that the authorities need prayer, and that the gospel is as much for them as for anyone. In other words, Paul is emphasising that Christ has died for all men indiscriminately, including those who are responsible for secular government, even though they might act in opposition to the gospel. Paul is therefore deterring those who might say 'Christ has died for all men, but the persecuting authorities are an obvious exception.' 'No,' says the Apostle, 'Even they are included, so pray for them, too.' This seems to be the natural sense of the disputed passage.

Wesley's exposition of I Timothy 2 fails to account for the apparent impotence of the divine will if, in the event, all are not saved. The ultimate cause is not spelt out, although Wesley does say that more are not converted because 'We do not pray enough.'

(66) In other words, the success of the divine purpose is totally dependent upon the will of man.

Owen's doctrine of the sovereignty of God would not allow him to entertain a view remotely similar to Wesley's. Since Paul does state that God wills the salvation of all (I Timothy 2:4), two things follow: (1) God's will is efficacious, therefore it cannot fail in its intention; (2) The 'all' must mean 'all distributively', or the elect from all classes and groups of men:

If all, then, here to be understood of all men universally, one of these two things must of necessity follow:-

(66) Notes on I Timothy 2:3.

either that God faileth of his purpose and intention,  
or else that all men universally shall be saved; .... (67)

Owen considers the distinction between God's will intending and his will commanding, arguing that only the former sense can apply in I Timothy 2:4. He rejects the latter application, linking it with Acts 17:30 'God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.' Owen insists that 'all' here can only be those 'to whom he granteth and revealeth the means of grace.' - but a fraction of the human race. Furthermore, Owen denies that, in this latter sense of the divine will, 'Christ died for as many as God thus willeth should be saved.' Owen's argument is very questionable here and his views have been dealt with earlier. It has been argued that the 'all' of Acts 17:30 must be universal, and understood in the context of the church's responsibility to declare the gospel to all people (Matthew 28:20). The church will be held responsible for failing to make the gospel known, as is strongly implied in Ezekiel 3:17f and I Corinthians 9:16. It has also been argued that the divine command to all to repent must correlate with a divine provision of grace for all, and in this sense Christ has died for all. In other words, the gospel, viewed as a declaration of grace, comprehends the universal call to repentance and a universal provision of grace. It is arguably immoral for one not to accompany the other. If grace is provided, then, since

(67) DD, p.345. For all the superficial similarities between Calvin and Owen in their exegesis of 'all' in 1 Timothy 2, there is a crucial difference. Whereas Owen assumes God's efficacious will is in Paul's mind, Calvin insists that the revealed will is under discussion. If the former applies, then 'all' must mean 'some of all sorts', but if the latter, then 'all' can mean 'all promiscuously'. If Calvin means a distributive 'all' only, in a revealed will context, then he contradicts his numerous statements where an indiscriminate idea is employed. If God's revealed will is envisaged, then 'classes of men' can consistently imply 'each member of the class'. Calvin could be clearer at this point. See his Comment, 1 Timothy 2:4, and Sermons on....Timothy & Titus, p.149.

Christ alone has purchased grace through the atonement, it is correct to say that Christ has died for all. However, whilst Wesley agrees with this understanding, Baxter, as we have seen, does not deny the partial truth of Owen's emphasis. In short, God's general will is a conditional will, whilst his special will is an efficacious one. Since, therefore, Paul is not discussing election, or the efficacy of the death of Christ, I Timothy 2:4-6 must be viewed in terms of God's general, conditional will revealed in the gospel.\* It has been shown that Owen fails to discredit the idea of conditional grace, and that he cannot do so without discarding his doctrine of common grace, with all its implications. It is a point not without some weight that, if Owen is correct, then 'some' may be substituted for 'all' throughout the passage (the distributive 'all' equals 'some' absolutely). If this were done, it would create havoc with the natural sense of the passage.

Another statement directly relevant to I Timothy 2 is II Peter 3:9 - 'The Lord....is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' The sentiments of Peter seem identical to those of Paul. However, there is not the kind of ambiguity in the former as has been detected in the latter. Owen is confident that 'common sense'

**\*Note:** Once this view of the passage is admitted, there is no need to plead for a distributive 'all', as even Calvin does. However, if the 'all classes' view is adopted, there is no constraint to exclude every member of every class, on the revealed will exegesis.

teaches that the 'us' spoken of are the Christians to whom Peter is writing, or the 'elect'. (68) The alternative view, that 'God ....hath the same will and mind towards all and everyone in the world.....comes not much short of extreme madness and folly (69).

It is remarkable that Wesley makes so little of this verse in his Notes, although his brevity does not obscure his thoughts. The 'us' are simply the 'children of men' and God is 'not willing that any soul which he hath made should perish' (70). Wesley seems in no way compelled to defend his exegesis. He clearly has no doubts that his reading of the verse is its most natural sense. What then is it that compels Owen to reject Wesley's view in such strong language? The answer probably lies in the fact that Owen's scholastic Calvinism takes as its central motif the divine decree of predestination. Such a starting point necessarily excludes the natural reading of II Peter 3:9 espoused not only by Wesley, but also by the Amyraldians (71). In keeping with the latter position - which allows for a two-fold understanding of the will of God - one general and conditional, the other special and efficacious, Baxter has no difficulties with the verse:

God hath provided a sufficient sacrifice for their sin in Christ; he reprieveth them from deserved damnation, and patiently endureth them; he offereth pardon and salvation to all that will accept it, who hear this offer; he giveth to all the world undeserved mercy, and obligeth them to repent in hope of more, .... (72)

(68) DD, p.348-9.

(69) Ibid, p.348.

(70) Notes on II Peter 3:9.

(71) See Armstrong, Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy, pp.165f.

(72) Paraphrase on II Peter 3:9.

Baxter is therefore employing the 'sufficient for all/efficacious for the elect' distinction, a dualism which applies to the love and will of God, also. The universal sufficiency of the atonement correlates with God's revealed will. The fact that Owen does not resort to this solution is conclusive proof that his scholastic Calvinism is very different from reformation Calvinism. Indeed, Calvin's own exposition of II Peter 3:9, cited by Amyraut (73) could not be more unlike the English Puritan:

This is his wondrous love towards the human race, that He desires all men to be saved, and prepared to bring even the perishing to safety. We must notice the order, that God is prepared to receive all men unto repentance, so that none may perish.

This is a statement Wesley could not quarrel with. However, Calvin provides his answer to a question Wesley all too often avoids:

It could be asked, if God does not want any to perish, why do so many in fact perish? My reply is that no mention is made here of the secret decree of God by which the wicked are doomed to their own ruin, but only of His loving kindness as it is made known to us in the Gospel. There God stretches out His hand to all alike, but He only grasps those (in such a way as to lead to himself) whom He has chosen before the foundation of the world. (74)

It is surely arguable to say that had Owen not been so pre-occupied with Arminianism, and so suspicious of the Amyraldian view, he might have avoided placing such an artificial and strained construction on an otherwise plain biblical statement. It is a fact

(73) 'The confidence that Calvin had in the goodness of his cause and the candour with which he has proceeded in the interpretation of Scripture have been so great, that he had no qualms about interpreting the words of St. Peter in this manner.' Given in Armstrong, op. cit., p.166.

(74) Comment, II Peter 3:9.

of some significance that in arguing as he does, Owen condemns not only Wesley, but also Calvin, a fact which has general relevance to this entire study. Owen's exegesis cannot therefore be admitted. His position is far from according with 'common sense'. To have done so, II Peter 3:9 would need to read that 'The Lord ....is not willing that any of the elect should perish', or at least 'not willing that any of his children should perish'. In the absence of such an explicit qualification, Owen's exegesis can be confidently rejected.

Much the same can be said of the next 'universalist' verse discussed by Owen. 'But we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, for the suffering of death, ....that by the grace of God he might taste death for every man.' (Hebrews 2:9) Owen maintains 'That this expression, every man, is commonly in the Scripture used to signify men under some restriction, cannot be denied.' (75) Owen then cites Colossians 1:28 (76) and I Corinthians 12:7 (77) as further examples of this. However, even Owen's supporting evidence is debateable. The latter verse is rather obvious, since only Christians received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and Calvin agrees they were given 'that the Church may derive benefit from them'. (78) With regard to Colossians 1:28, Wesley appears to concur with Owen to a degree, as if Paul is saying, 'We teach the

(75) DD, p.349.

(76) 'Christ....whom we preach, warning everyman, and teaching everyman in all wisdom; that we may present everyman perfect in Christ Jesus....'

(77) 'But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.'

(78) Comment, I Corinthians 12:7.

ignorant, and admonish them that are already taught.' (79)

However, this verse is not so obviously restricted as Owen maintains, and Calvin's comment suggests why:

The expressions that follow have also great weight. He represents himself as the teacher of all men....As if he said, 'God has placed me in a lofty position, as a public herald of His secret, that the whole world without exception might learn from me.' (80)

Hebrews 2:9 is equally as debateable as Owen's supporting evidence. Whilst Owen is probably right in saying that huper pantos is used by the author to combat any anti-Gentile prejudice, this in no way confirms his thesis that 'all' is restricted to the elect. (81) That only the elect are intended in v.9 because the author speaks with immediate reference to the actual recipients of salvation in Hebrews 2:10f is by no means self evident. His reference to 'man' in v.6, (What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?) where he quotes from Psalm 8, appears to mean 'mankind', a view supported also by Calvin (82). The author is arguably descending from the general to the particular in the course of his exposition - from the general provision to its particular reception. Wesley's brief but adequate comment is therefore perfectly admissible:

That by the grace of God, he might taste death - An expression denoting both the reality of His death and the shortness of its continuance. For every man - That ever was or will be born into the world. (83)

(79) Notes on Colossians 1:28.

(80) Comment, Colossians 1:28.

(81) DD, p.350.

(82) 'He is not, therefore, speaking of one man, but all mankind.'  
Comment, Hebrews 2:5.

(83) Notes on Hebrews 2:9.

Baxter is not unmindful of the kind of objection advanced by Owen. Christ's death 'for all' means a conditional, if not an efficacious, provision of grace for all:

And as his death was suffered in the common nature of man, and the sins of all men had a causal hand in it, and it was by God's grace the purchasing cause of the conditional covenant of grace, and of all good that men receive, so he died to bring man to glory with himself. (84)

Whilst Hebrews 2:9 cannot be expounded to support Owen's particularism, it can, at least superficially, support Wesley's universalism since he argues that gospel promises are conditional in any case. Despite its unequivocal commitment to divine election the Baxterian via media is not in the least embarrassed by giving the text an equally natural reading.

Owen's treatment of II Corinthians 5:14,15 demonstrates how scholastic theologising can prejudice the perception of biblical data. Owen's doctrine of limited atonement demands a priori that 'all' be viewed as 'the elect'. Paul's words, '....we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead' are explained by Owen thus: 'The Apostle affirms so many to be dead as Christ died for; not that Christ died for so many as were dead.' (85) But this still begs the question, 'Does Paul say that Christ only died for the elect?' Owen presumes to alter the sense of the Apostle, as if he had said, 'if one died for us, the elect, then we were all dead.'

(84) Paraphrase on Hebrews 2:9.

(85) DD, p.350.



The 'death' here attributed to the 'all' is a matter requiring clarification. Scholars have pointed out that the A.V. translation is inaccurate because it construes the aorist apethanon as if it was an imperfect. It should be rendered 'therefore all died', as found in the R.V. and more recent translations (e.g. R.S.V., N.I.V.). Paul is not therefore saying, as Wesley understands him, that the 'all' were 'naturally dead - in a state of spiritual death and liable to death eternal' (86), in the sense of Ephesians 2:1. Alternatively, Owen argues that the apostle is speaking of being dead to sin, rather than being 'dead in sin', linking up II Corinthians 5:14 with Romans 6:1f(87). Since this 'death' only applies to believers, in Owen's view - and only the elect actually believe - then the 'all' must denote the elect. However, it is questionable whether Owen's understanding of Paul is correct at this point. In the Romans passage, Paul is teaching that baptism identifies believers with Christ subjectively; his death for their sin has become their death to sin. Believers become 'dead' at their conversion, not before, in this subjective sense intended by the Apostle. 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin...' (Romans 6:11) He is not saying here that believers 'died' as and when Christ died.

Owen's solution is more plausible than Wesley's, but it is open to a serious objection. It is clear from the Corinthian

(86) Notes on II Corinthians 5:14.

(87) 'These words, then, 'If Christ died for all, then were all dead,' are concerning the death of them unto sin for whom Christ died, at least of those concerning whom he here speaketh; and what is this to the general ransom?' DD, p.352. See an alternative view in R. V. G. Tasker, The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (1958), p. 86.

statement that the 'all' died as and when the 'one' died. The 'two deaths' were simultaneous. This does not apply in the Romans passage. There, Paul is discussing the believer's conscious 'dying to sin' in the post-conversion context symbolised by baptism. The logical connection in the first case between the death of 'one' and the death of 'all', would imply a strictly causal or necessary connection between Christ's death and the believer's in the second, if Owen were correct. The fact that Paul is engaged in exhortations to holiness refutes such a deterministic idea. Believers are exhorted to appropriate or 'enter into' the implications of Christ's death. It does not happen automatically, ('Work out your own salvation,' Philippians 2:12; 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,' Romans 6:12). Owen's interpretation of II Corinthians 5:14 in the light of Romans 6:1-12 would only be valid if Paul had said, 'If one died for all, then they eventually become dead in him, as and when they believe.' However, the subjective 'death' of Romans 6 assumes the objective 'death' of II Corinthians 5. Whilst the former is restricted to believers, the latter represents a universal provision of grace. One may conclude, in the words of James Denney, that

The apostle is dealing with something antecedent to Christian experience, something by which all such experience is to be generated and which, therefore, is in no sense identical with it....The inferential clause 'so then all died'.... puts as plainly as it can be put the idea that His death was equivalent to the death of all. In other words, it was the death of all men which was died by Him. (88)

- (88) The Death of Christ (1960), p.84. Owen limits the 'all' to believers. However, as a paedobaptist, he would include infants within the covenant of grace. Augustine's comment in connection with II Corinthians 5:14 is therefore of interest: 'Now, if infants are not embraced within this reconciliation and salvation, who wants them for the baptism of Christ? But if they are embraced, then are they reckoned as among the dead for whom He died....' A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants, Anti-Pelagian Writings, ed. Schaff, Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5 (1956 rep.), p.32.

Paul, then, is saying that the atonement has reference to all. The death deserved by all the guilty was tasted by Christ, in order that all the guilty might be offered mercy. The 'equivalence' of which Denney writes becomes the springboard of universal gospel proclamation.

That the above alternative to both Owen and Wesley's account does justice to the entire section (II Corinthians 5:11-21) can now be shown. The apostle is clearly concerned to vindicate his ministry. His 'sacred enthusiasm' in proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation had been attacked. In his concern to 'persuade men', his enthusiasm appeared to border on madness (v.13), so he was anxious to reveal his motivation. '....for the love of Christ constraineth us....' (v.14). He then provides a rational justification for his deeply felt sense of vocation: '....we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.' (v.14b,15, N.I.V.). In Denney's words, Paul is saying '(since) it is our death that Christ died on the cross, there is in the cross the constraint of infinite love.' (89)

Paul's enthusiasm can only mean that self-centredness has been replaced by Christ-centredness. The love of Christ places him

(89) Op. cit., p.84. R. W. Dale writes similarly. 'According to St. Paul. therefore, the Death of Christ....was a representative death. He so 'died for all' that the race died in Him. His Death was the true crisis in the history of every man.' The Atonement (1905 ed.), pp. 322-323.

under an obligation to preach the gospel. Such then becomes the animus for his ministry, and the reason why he urges others to believe too. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself....as ambassadors for Christ....we implore you....be reconciled to God!' (vs.18-20) Paul, then, is saying that what applies to him applies to all his hearers. As Denney again writes, 'The death of all was died by Christ. His death can put the constraint of love upon all men, only when it is thus judged.' (90) Wesley's comments on v.15 are therefore in order:

And that he died for all - That all might be saved.  
That they who live - That all who live upon the earth,  
should not henceforth - From the moment they know Him.  
Live unto themselves - Seek their own honour, profit,  
pleasure. But unto Him - In all righteousness and true  
holiness. (91)

For all their brevity, Wesley's notes sum up the spirit of the apostle's words: The love of Christ is clearly the basis for his own vocation and reason why men are obligated to believe in Christ and to yield their lives to Him. Owen's assessment is the very antithesis of Paul's fervent appeal:

That all and everyone are morally bound to live unto Christ, virtute praecepti, we deny; only they are bound to live to Him to whom he is revealed, - indeed only they who live by Him, that have a spiritual life in and with him: all others are under previous obligations. (92)

We have noted in an earlier chapter that Owen believes men are duty bound to repent and believe the gospel; (although we

(90) Ibid, p.84.

(91) Notes on II Corinthians 5:15.

(92) DD, p.351.

showed that Owen could not justify this from his particularistic standpoint). Such a duty is what he calls here 'previous obligations'. Since therefore all are obligated to believe the gospel - and accepting the Lordship of Christ is part of conversion - how can Owen coherently deny that all are 'bound to live unto Christ'? The reason why Owen is unable to think in these terms is that the 'obliging' love of Christ is not in any sense to be proclaimed to all. Charles Wesley surely captures the spirit of the apostle's 'sacred enthusiasm' in the appropriate medium:

Didst Thou not die that I might live  
No longer to myself, but Thee,  
Might body, soul, and spirit give  
To Him who gave Himself for me?  
Come then, my master and my God,  
Take the dear purchase of Thy blood. (93)

Although Baxter was as much committed to the doctrine of election as Owen, he, like Wesley, had no inhibitions in commenting on an election-free passage such as II Corinthians 5:11-21:

If any think we are too zealously transported, let them know, that the greatness of Christ's love to us, and ours to him, constraineth us, and we'll have no cold indifferency: For we have cause to judge that they are great things which our redemption intimateth, even that Christ, who died for all, all men dead in sin and misery; and that he therefore redeemed them by his death, that they who are recovered by him should not hereafter live to themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again. (94)

Owen's point that only those are obliged to 'live unto Christ' to whom Christ has been 'revealed' has relevance to a small group

(93) M.H.B. (1933), 558, v.3. Calvin would entirely approve of Wesley's lines. 'For unless our hearts are harder than iron, the remembrance of the great love Christ has shown us by submitting to death for our sakes is bound to make us devote ourselves entirely to Him.' Because of the 'wonderful love of Christ....we owe to Christ both life and death, so completely has He bound us to Himself.' Comment, II Corinthians 5:14.

(94) Paraphrase on II Corinthians 5:14,15.

of verses involving universal terms, viz, Titus 2:10-14; 3:4; 1:3; and I Timothy 4:10. In these passages, the apostle asserts that the grace of 'God our Saviour' has 'appeared to all men'. The epiphaneia (arguably similar in meaning to apokalupsis, or revelation, see I Peter 1:7, A.V.) of which Paul speaks in reference to 'all men' is something which Owen restricts to the elect (in quote 92). The immediate context of Titus 2 shows Paul speaking of masters and servants, suggesting that 'all' means 'all kinds or classes of men'. For once, our commentators are agreed that this is the intended sense here. The fact that Wesley was not concerned to exploit every instance of 'all men' in his theological interests is proof of his scholarly integrity. (His treatment of Romans 8:29 is one glaring exception.) Where he rejects the 'distributive all' for the 'universal all' (as in I Timothy 2), he obviously does so when he believes the context demands it. It may still be argued, however, that the 'distributive all' has meaning only because of a 'promiscuous all'. The two are not mutually exclusive. In short, the gospel denies national or class discrimination because it denies individual discrimination. As a general revelation of conditional grace, none are excluded from that 'grace that....hath appeared to all men'. (95) However, this 'general appearing' does not exclude the 'particular, efficacious

(95) Calvin's exposition of Titus 2:11 is another example where he considers 'all men' to mean 'all classes of men'.

revelation' of Christ to the elect, of which Owen speaks. At this point, the Arminians and High Calvinists are really giving necessa-  
e rily complimentary accounts of why some are saved and others are not. The former attribute it to wilful rejection; the latter - ultimately speaking - to non-election. It was Baxter's concern to comprehend both factors in his dualistic conception of grace. Common or general grace was a sufficient introduction to saving grace, the latter being efficacious for salvation. The non-elect 'reveal themselves' by rejecting saving grace, whilst the elect partake of it.

With regard to I Timothy 4:10, ('...we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially those that believe'), Owen denies that the apostle is referring to a universal atonement. More had argued that 'in all the offices of Christ, the priest, the prophet, the king, there is that which is more general, and that which is more special and peculiar'. (96)

Owen takes the view 'agreed upon by all sound interpreters' that Paul is dealing with the 'protecting providence of God, general towards all, special and peculiar towards his church'. (97) Soter is then to be translated as 'preserver or deliverer' or saviour in a providential rather than a redemptive sense. 'It is a providential preservation, and not a purchased salvation that is

(96) Universality of Free Grace, given in Owen, DD, p.188.

(97) DD, p.190.

intimated.' (98)

Wesley agrees that Paul is speaking of temporal preservation, but he refuses to accept this as the exclusive meaning:

Who is the Saviour of all men - Preserving them in this life, and willing to save them eternally. But especially - In a more eminent manner, Of them that believe - And so are saved everlastingly. (99)

William Hendriksen rejects the redemptive type of exegesis, as expressed by the Lutheran scholar R. C. H. Lenski, on the grounds that I Timothy 4:10 says that God is actually the Saviour of all men, not that He wants to save. (100) Therefore, soter cannot relate to 'eternal salvation' but to temporal deliverance. In this latter respect (so the argument runs), God does 'save' men other than believers. Since the apostle in this very verse refers to 'labouring and suffering reproach' in the course of his ministry, Paul is saying that the God who preserves mankind generally, takes special care of his servants. However, Hendriksen goes on to suggest that there are redemptive connotations in the statement by Paul, in that 'the gospel of salvation' is earnestly proclaimed to all men' and, in this respect 'the kindness of God extends to all'. Furthermore to 'those that believe' God 'imparts salvation', since he is their Soter 'in a very special sense'. (101)

Hendriksen's account is open to a number of criticisms. His

(98) Ibid, p.191. Calvin supports Owen here: 'For here soter is a general term, meaning one who guards and preserves. His argument is that God's kindness extends to all men. And if there is no one without the experience of sharing in God's kindness, how much more of that kindness shall the godly know who hope in him. Will He not take special care of them?' Comment, I Timothy 4:10. For a discussion on soter, see William Hendriksen, Commentary on I Timothy....(1959), pp.153-156.

(99) Notes on I Timothy 4:10.

(100) Op. cit., p.153. For Lenski, see The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to....Timothy (1964 ed.), p. 639.

(101) Ibid., p. 156.



exegesis commences like Owen's in limiting the sense of soter to temporal rather than eternal deliverance. Instead of maintaining this view, he ends up with a position almost indistinguishable from Wesley's. In other words, the 'soteriology' comprehends temporal and eternal salvation. However, the salvation which in a 'special sense' applies to believers must be of the same kind as that which applies to mankind in general, and Owen is more consistent than Hendriksen in this respect in denying that eternal salvation is in any way implied.

Another criticism against Hendriksen has application to Owen also. That God actually saves in the sense argued for, (therefore eternal salvation must be ruled out), is an argument against John 4:42, 'the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' To argue, by parity of reasoning, that this statement cannot refer to eternal salvation because all the world is not saved in that sense, suggests a weakness in the original argument. In short, there are not sufficient grounds in the context of I Timothy 4 to exclude the eternal aspect as Owen wishes to maintain, and Hendriksen's conclusion indicates this.

By way of confirming the validity of this criticism, Hendriksen refers the reader to I Timothy 1:15, which, like I Timothy 4:10, is prefaced by the words 'This is a faithful

saying and worthy of all acceptance.' This argues a parallelism in Paul's mind between 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' and 'God, who is the Saviour of all men'. Whilst the indeterminate plural, 'sinners', does not specify 'all sinners', the parallelism argues for definite redemptive connotations for both statements.

Lastly, Hendriksen's exposition is very relevant to Owen's doctrine of grace. Although he does not employ the terminology, Hendriksen is implying that I Timothy 4:10 demands a common grace/special grace distinction. We have already demonstrated that Owen's doctrine of common grace is an embarrassment to his particularism, since unlike Berkhof (who wishes to limit the concept to providence), Owen gives redemptive significance to the idea. It is clear that Hendriksen, for all his discussion of soter, entertains an understanding of I Timothy 4:10 virtually indistinguishable from that of Baxter (and to a degree, Wesley), whose dualistic scheme of grace underlies his comment:

For it is on the belief of this, that we labour, strive and suffer, trusting in the goodness and promises of God, who is life, and the Lord of life, and as their Saviour giveth the mercies of this life and that to come, as men are fitted for each, to all men; all good being from him to all the world: but eternal good being by his promise secured to all true believers, 'which others reject when it is offered them, for temporal good). (102)

It is obvious therefore that the group of universalist verses

(102) Paraphrase on I Timothy 4:10.

we have considered cannot justly lend support to Owen's particularism. Only by excessive straining can this be done. Wesley has little difficulty with the verses, but his ever present problem is guaranteeing the 'efficacy' of the universal gospel. By resorting to his dualistic scheme of grace, Baxter provides the most coherent exegesis, his comments comprehending the two apparently conflicting emphases of Owen and Wesley in a unified scheme.

B. This section will be concerned with those texts which speak of 'the world' and 'the whole world' (103). What applies to the general terms 'all men' and 'everyman' applies also in the present consideration. Whereas Owen is committed to demonstrating that 'world' must be capable of a restricted understanding, Wesley must regard his universalism to be irrefutably supported by prima facie evidence. Obviously, Owen's task is the harder one, unless the case for the perspicuity of Scripture possesses no practical validity.

It would seem to be true that 'world' is used in a variety of senses in the biblical writings. Even the writings of John - from which most of the disputed verses come - demand that kosmos be carefully expounded in context. By employing an elaborate scheme, Owen endeavours to prove not only what might be otherwise obvious to the intelligent reader, but also that the universalist case is not as obvious as it appears. Owen argues for a five-fold

(103) John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:51; II Corinthians 5:19; I John 2:2.

distinction in the way 'world' is used in Scripture:

- (i) In John 1:9, for example, the physical fabric of heaven and earth is understood.
- (ii) In John 7:4, the world of men is being denoted.
- (iii) I John 2:15-17 is describing 'the world corrupted'.
- (iv) In John 18:36, the word is used with reference to the 'social' or 'political' world of human affairs, and lastly
- (v) It is used with regard to the realm of satanic influence John 14:30.

Thus far, Owen's scheme would not be seriously questioned.

More recent writers such as W. E. Vine (104) and Donald Guthrie (105), to name only two, adopt a similar approach.

In his second category (ii), Owen makes further distinctions, not all of which appear to be necessary. Six sub-divisions are employed, viz,

- (a) The world of men universally considered, Romans 3:6, etc.,
- (b) The world of men viewed indefinitely, John 7:4, etc.,
- (c) The world of many, as opposed to few, Matthew 18:7, etc.,
- (d) The world comparatively, for a great part of the world, Romans 1:8, etc.,
- (e) The world of the Roman Empire, Luke 2:1.
- (f) 'For men distinguished in their several qualifications' (106) This sixth sub-division, which is further sub-divided, comprehends, in Owen's view, the 'world' of God's people and the 'world' of the wicked.

Compared with the other sub-divisions, the last immediately

(104) An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (1941), (1952 ed.), pp.124-5.

(105) New Testament Theology (1981), pp.131f.

(106) DD, p.305.

seems questionable. Although a twentieth century mind, accustomed to speaking of the 'scientific world', the 'world of the arts' and the 'world of sport', etc, might not object to speaking of the 'elect world' and the 'world of the wicked', it is highly doubtful whether there are any New Testament expressions remotely equivalent to these. Owen's conception of 'kosmos' finds no support in any of the standard reference works (107). What is even more questionable is that the key verses relevant to this present discussion are cited by Owen as instances of the 'world' of God's people, e.g. John 3:16, II Corinthians 5:19, I John 2:2. In this respect, it is arguable that Owen's particularistic presuppositions are influencing his perception of biblical data, resulting in highly debatable conclusions. Owen's entire discussion at this point possesses a distinctly artificial character. Such is evident in his lengthy and exhaustive exposition of John 3:16, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

After giving a paraphrase of the verse, Owen makes a series of observations which, in his view, are 'sufficient each of them to evert the general ransom'. (108) Consistent with his particularism, Owen says:

- (107) Edward Robinson, A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament (1836); Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (1887); J. H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1893); The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (1908); Hastings (ed.), Dictionary of the Bible (1909); Hastings (ed.) Dictionary of the Apostolic Church (1918); Abbot-Smith, Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (1921); Alex. Souter, Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (1925); G. R. Berry, Inter-linear Greek-English New Testament (1944); J. Orr (ed.) International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1957); Everett F. Harrison, Dictionary of Theology (1960); The New Bible Dictionary (IVF) (1962); Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1964); Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1965).

By the 'world', we understand the elect of God only, though not considered in this place as such, but under such a notion as, being true of them, serves for the farther exaltation of God's love towards them, which is the end here designed; and this is, as they are poor, miserable, lost creatures in the world, of the world, scattered abroad in all places of the world, not tied to Jew or Greeks, but dispersed in any nation, kindred, and language under heaven. (109)

In an earlier criticism of universalist exegesis, Owen had insisted that without due regard to the context and certain rules of interpretation, erroneous conclusions were inevitable (110). He is surely correct in observing that in John 1:9 'He was in the world, and the world was made by him....', kosmos means the entire created order. Equally, in Luke 2:1 'that all the world should be taxed', oikoumene clearly means the world of Rome's jurisdiction - the Roman empire. In these, and other instances, the contextual indications dictate the sense. It must therefore be asked what contextual information justifies Owen in restricting kosmos in John 3:16 to the elect? In short, there is no such information. There is no reason at all to suggest that kosmos should be taken in any other sense than 'the world of mankind in general'. Owen can only arrive at his conclusion by imposing the constraints of his particularist theology upon the text. From a methodological standpoint, his theology functions as an a priori principle, leading to questionable exegesis of the textual data.

John Wesley's exposition of John 3:16 is predictable, yet he

(108) DD, p.321.

(109) Ibid, p.321.

(110) Ibid, p.303.

cannot be charged with the kind of special pleading evident in Owen. Even allowing for his Arminianism, Wesley's 'natural' exegesis arguably 'fits' the contextual atmosphere of the passage:

God so loved the world - That is, all men under heaven; even those that despise His love, and will for that cause finally perish. Otherwise, not to believe, would be no sin to them. For what should they believe? Ought they to believe that Christ was given for them? Then He was given for them (111)

Underlying Wesley's exegesis is the view that Christ 'was given' not to save a particular number of predestined persons, but merely to make possible the salvation of all who believe. Accordingly, Owen rejects such a conception which views the atonement as without 'a purpose and resolution to save any' (112). As has been pointed out by Guthrie (113), the kind of position embraced by Wesley has its problems also. It is suggested that the 'world cannot mean everyone' since only believers are actually saved. Furthermore, even though the divine foreknowledge is aware of the precise number of believers, that number is, on Wesley's view, a merely contingent fact. Owen is surely correct to argue that, however kosmos is to be understood, the gospel does presuppose the doctrine of particular election. After all, Christ did speak of 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me....' (John 6:37).

On balance, however, it is arguable to say that Owen's

(111) Notes on John 3:16.

(112) DD, p.320.

(113) 'In the case of John 3:16 it may not be thought unreasonable to suppose that God's love embraces everyone in the world, although this raises problems over the statement in John 3:17 that God sent his Son 'that the world might be saved through him', since immediately afterwards salvation is restricted to those who believe. This implies that caution should be used before assuming that the 'world' means everyone. New Testament Theology (1981), pp.131-132.

problems with John 3:16-17 are greater than Wesley's, as far as the exegesis of this particular passage is concerned. It does seem artificial to interpret kosmos to mean eklektos. However, Owen endeavours to justify himself from the charge of a strict alteration of the text. In fact, he seems anxious to meet the objection:

So that all those vain flourishes which some men make with these words, by putting the word elect into the room of the word world, and then coining absurd consequences, are quite beside the business in hand. Yet, farther, we deny that by a supply of the word elect into the text any absurdity or untruth will justly follow. (114)

The only way that Owen can deny that 'any absurdity' follows is to deny that the 'whosoever' of John 3:16 has reference to mankind generally. The verse is therefore, in Owen's view, stating something about the unconditional purposes of God, rather than the conditional promises of the gospel:

I deny that the word (whosoever) is distributive of the object of God's love, but only declarative of his end and aim in giving Christ in the pursuit of that love, - to wit, that believers might be saved. So that the sense is, 'God so loved his elect throughout the world, that he gave his Son with this intention, that by him believers might be saved. (115)

In seeking to be consistent with his particularism, Owen cannot avoid distorting the plain sense of the text. Despite all he says to the contrary, if the 'world' means the 'elect', then the 'whosoever' suggests that some of the elect might perish, if

(114) DD, p.326.

(115) Ibid, p.214.



they did not believe, surely an absurd consequence. It is clear, therefore, that Owen has, in the interests of his theological presuppositions, made a significant textual alteration. It is certain that no contextual information exists to justify what he has done and, for that reason, his exegesis cannot command support. If the sense of the text is as Owen argues, then the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture is a fallacy.

A further instance of Owen's alteration of the plain sense of the text occurs with regard to the divine love (agape) of John 3:16. He denies that such is 'a natural affection and propensity in God to the good of the creature'. It is, Owen insists, 'an act of his will'. In other words, agape means thelema. There is, of course, the problem of the anthropomorphic language of revelation, where theologians have been careful not to attach any 'absolute' sense to such language. However, even if only an analogy between divine and human love exists, the significance of agape is surely undermined if Owen's exegesis is followed. Owen's grounds for his position are that such a general affection in God not resulting in a general salvation 'carrieth along with it a great deal of imperfection and weakness' (116). This is arguably very rationalistic treatment of the issues, and is equivalent to attributing weakness rather than compassion to the tears Christ

(116) DD, p.322. The Barthian scholar, J. B. Torrance agrees with the criticism of Owen expressed above. 'It seems to me that this is a flagrant case where a kind of logic leads us to run in the face of the plain teaching of the Bible that God is Agape (pure love) in his innermost being.....' Op. cit., EQ, April, 1983, p. 85.

wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).

Like Baxter (117), John Howe (1630-1705) resisted Owen's rationalism, arguing that 'imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the divine will, merely for its not effecting everything whereto it may have a real propension' (118). In other words, there are too many biblical statements in which the divine mercy is expressed, which are not accompanied by actual deliverance, to allow that mercy to be explained away.

It is obvious therefore, that Wesley will have no difficulties with John 3:16, although, with regard to divine election, other texts expose the deficiencies of his theology on that subject. It is equally obvious that Owen cannot accept John 3:16 as it stands, without imposing the constraints of his particularism upon the verse. There is no justification either for Owen's treatment of, or Guthrie's hesitation over, the word 'world'. Notwithstanding the particularism elsewhere seen in John's gospel, there can be no doubt that John 3:16 is a statement of the gospel as a conditional overture of grace to all. It is a statement, not about the secret, unconditional purposes of grace, but the revealed, conditional promises of grace. In other words, only the dualism of Calvin, Baxter and the 'moderate' Calvinists can do full justice to all the data in question. Although John 3:16 is not reflecting

(117) Is God an imperfect God to Adam, because he saved him not by the way of innocency, at first made by God the way of life? ....Or is the Holy Ghost an imperfect sanctifier, because he giveth some but such common and temporary grace and faith, as is mentioned in Hebrews 6:5,6, Matthew 13, etc, ....Must Christ do all that our muddy brains will dictate to him, or else be reproached as an imperfect Saviour? O take heed!  
CT, Bk. 2, p.67.

(118) For Howe, see Henry Rogers, The Life and Character of John Howe, M.A. (n.d.). See Howe's popular treatise The Redeemer's Tears Went over Lost Souls (1684), and his more comprehensive work entitled The Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men with the Wisdom and Sincerity of His Counsels and Exhortations (1677), Works, (1862). R. L. Dabney deals with the same issues in his God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy,

the particularism of the divine purposes, it is hardly surprising that Owen should feel the need to 'particularise' its expressions. As a theologian who effectively denies the basis of 'common grace' (and we have shown Owen to be self-contradictory at this point), it is not surprising to find him being consistent in evacuating such general statements of grace as John 3:16 of their natural sense (119). Accordingly, Baxter has no difficulties with the text. He paraphrases it thus:

For God who is love itself, so far loved, ~~lapsed~~ and lost mankind, as that he gave his only begotten Son to be incarnate and to be their redeemer, by his meritorious life, and death and resurrection, and to make them this promise, covenant and offer, that whosoever truly believeth in him, should have his sin forgiven and should not perish, but have everlasting blessed life. (120)

As would be expected, there is nothing in Baxter's paraphrase which John Wesley would object to. Like Wesley, Baxter is aware of the implications for those who reject the love of God:

For the true cause of men's condemnation is (not that they have no Saviour or ransom, being left as devils to remediless despair, but) that a Saviour as light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, and so reject him and his truth and grace.... (121)

As has been pointed out earlier, this is a matter which Owen cannot deal with coherently. Unlike Baxter, he cannot argue for a gracious provision for any but the elect. Since Baxter denies that the decrees of election and reprobation are the same in

(118) continued/ in Discussions: Evangelical and Theological (1967 rep.), Vol. 1, pp.282-313. For Howe quote, see Prescience, sec.XXII.

(119) The same must be said of Owen's treatment of John 6:51, where Christ speaks of '....my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Predictably, he denies that Christ was given for all, therefore, 'world' must mean 'the elect'. The fact that Christ said 'my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven (6:32) to those whom he knew would later reject him (6:52,60,66) vindicates Wesley's Note on John 3:16. Owen's further criticism that Christ could not, 'in his oblation' intend to purchase life and salvation for all them whom he knew to be damned many ages before' (DD, p.339) is succinctly answered by Baxter who says that it is equally absurd to say 'That he died for them that were long ago pardoned and saved, and to purchase heaven for them that had possession of it

character - one is unconditional, the other conditional, he is able to avoid placing the immediate cause of men's condemnation in their non-election.

Whereas Owen's exegesis is consistent with hypercalvinist rationalism, it is not consistent with Reformation Calvinism.

Neither do later expressions of high Calvinism always endorse his view. Even Augustine, the author of De Predestinatione Sanctorum, wrote in his Enchiridion with an understanding of 'world' very different from Owen's:

Both baptism and death were submitted to by (Christ), not through a pitiable necessity, but of His own free pity for us, and as part of an arrangement by which, as one man brought sin into the world, that is, upon the whole human race, so one man was to take away the sin of the world. (122)

Luther saw no reason to modify Augustine's view when he said that by 'world', John simply meant 'the whole human race' (123). Calvin says that Christ 'was offered as our Saviour....because the heavenly Father does not wish the human race that He loves to perish.' (124); and on the subject of the 'whosoever', as well as the 'world', Calvin could not be more different from Owen:

And he has used the general term, both to invite indiscriminately all to share in life and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also the significance of the term 'world' which He had used before....He nevertheless shows He is favourable to the whole world when He calls all without exception to the faith of Christ.... (125)

(119) continued/ long before.' CT, Bk. 2, p.67. Therefore, Christ was given for 'the life of the world' in the sense, says Baxter, 'of a conditional promise or gift of life....' Ibid, p.67.

(120) Paraphrase on John 3:16.

(121) Paraphrase on John 3:19.

(122) Works, in A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ed. Philip Schaff, Vol. 3, (1956 rep.), p.253.

(123) The Bondage of the Will, tr. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnson, (1957), p.302.

(124) Comment, John 3:16.

(125) Ibid.

This evidence surely confirms the thesis that Reformation Calvinism and Puritan high-Calvinism are significantly different, and the rise of Arminianism during the early seventeenth century must be seen as a protest against the latter.(126) It is true that Owen's understanding of John 3:16 and related biblical statements was typical of his generation (127), but even later critics of both Arminianism and Amyraldianism have not always endorsed his exegesis. Even Owen himself seems reluctant to use his own rigidly particularistic conception in every statement where it might be used. Since he views the agape of John 3:16 as special and particular rather than general and universal, he must mean the 'free love of God to elect lost sinners' rather than simply 'lost sinners'(128) and 'the elect creature' rather than merely 'the creature' (129).

The writings of the Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), and the American divines R. L. Dabney (1820-1898) and Charles Hodge (1797-1878) - all Presbyterians - provide important evidence of nineteenth century high-Calvinist modification of Owen's type of extreme particularism. Chalmers' statements on the atonement reveal a doctrine very different from that maintained by Owen and the Westminster divines. Indeed, whilst there is no explicit acceptance of the Amyraldian view, Chalmers' views may justly be

(126) See John Calvin in Documents of Modern History, ed. G. R. Potter and M. Greengrass,(1983).

(127) The presbyterian John Flavel (1628-1691) wrote in a sermon on John 3:16, that 'The objects of this love, or the persons to whom the eternal Lord delivered Christ, and that is the (World). This must respect the elect of God in the world, ....and the word 'world' is put to signify the elect....' Works (1820), (1968 rep.), Vol. 1, pp.63-64. Thomas Watson, (d. 1690), another presbyterian wrote more pointedly: 'We must qualify the term world. The world is taken either in a limited sense, for the world of the elect; or in a larger sense, for both elect and reprobates. 'Christ takes away the sins of the world,' that is, the world of the elect.' A Body of Divinity (1890), (1958 rep.), p.71.

(128) DD, p.320.

described, like Calvin's, as incipient Amyraldianism. Not only does he reject the commercial theory of the atonement, but he says that the doctrine of particular redemption 'as often treated' is 'a most unpractical and useless theory, and not easy to be vindicated, without the infliction of an unnatural violence on many passages of Scripture.' (130) Chalmers says that ministers of the gospel are 'puzzled to understand how they should proceed with the calls and invitations of the gospel' if 'Christ died only for the elect, and not for all.' (131) The gospel is viewed as 'heaven's good will to the whole human race' and to conceive it to be otherwise is to be involved in 'a sad misunderstanding'. (132)

In what might appear as a reference to Calvinistic scholasticism, Chalmers interestingly suggests that, unlike science and civilization, Christianity had not fully emerged from its medieval period. 'There is still a remainder of the old spell, even the spell of human authority, and by which a certain cramp or confinement has been laid on the genius of Christianity.' (133) Chalmers clearly entertains a conception of 'world' very different from that of Owen:

Now for the specific end of conversion, the available scripture is not that Christ laid down His life for the sheep, but that Christ is set forth a propitiation for the sins of the world. It is not because I know myself to be one of the

(129) Ibid, p.320.

(130) On the Universality of the Gospel, in Institutes of Theology, (1849), Vol. 2, p.403. For Chalmers, see DNB.

(131) Ibid, p.403.

(132) Ibid, p.404.

(133) Ibid, p.404.

sheep, or one of the elect, but because I know myself to be one of the world, that I take to myself the calls and promises of the New Testament. (134)

Whilst it is true that Chalmers is stressing the doctrine of the universal gospel offer - a truth which Owen also taught - it is equally clear that he regards a universal atonement as the sine qua non of that doctrine. Chalmers position is hardly distinguishable from that of Calvin, Baxter and later 'moderate' Calvinists. Indeed, his position seems very close to that of his contemporary and fellow-Scot Ralph Wardlaw. It is a matter of some interest that whilst Wardlaw is severely criticised in John Macleod's Scottish Theology, for his theology of the atonement (135), no reference is made to the teaching of Chalmers (136).

There can be no doubt that Charles Hodge was a leading exponent of presbyterian Calvinism during the nineteenth century. Indeed, Professor John Murray wrote in 1957 that 'In the annals of the Reformed Churches throughout the world for the last hundred years no name is better known than that of Charles Hodge.' (137) William Cunningham, who was Chalmers' successor at New College, Edinburgh, regarded Hodge as the foremost Reformed divine of the day (138). This fact adds significance to the subject under discussion. Although it is true that Hodge argues against the Amyraldian view of the atonement (139), it can hardly be said that his own

(134) Ibid, p.406.

(135) Op. cit., pp.247f.

(136) Ibid, p.268. Donald Fraser states uncritically that Chalmers' 'convictions were in harmony with (the) Westminster Confession of Faith' but, more accurately, that whilst he 'was a firm predestinarian' he was aware that 'the tenet of divine predestination must not and should not limit offers of mercy.' Chalmers' students were warned against 'injuring the gospel by a misunderstood and misapplied Calvinism.' Thomas Chalmers, (1881), pp.78-86. For a more recent assessment of Chalmers, see Iain H. Murray, Thomas Chalmers, BOT, issue 198, March, 1980.

(137) Charles Hodge, Princeton Sermons (1958 rep.), v. See also DAB.

(138) John Macleod, Scottish Theology, (1974 rep.), p.271.

teachings are unequivocally those of the Westminster divines. For instance, he rejects the commercial theory of the atonement, denying that 'it was the doctrine of any Church on earth' (140). This is doubtful, especially since the Westminster Confession asserts that 'Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified.' (141) It is true that the confession does not regard sin in exclusively commercial terms (142), but Hodge's categorical denial is incorrect. What is significant is that Hodge criticises and rejects that theory of the atonement which is the very basis of the doctrine of a limited atonement taught by Owen as well as the Westminster divines.

With regard to Owen's restricted conception of 'world' in John 3:16, it is obvious that Hodge adopts a different view. What is also clear is that Hodge's position is identical with the kind of dualism implicit in Calvin and explicit in Baxter and the Amyraldians:

Augustinians do not deny that Christ died for all men. What they deny is that He died equally, and with the same design, for all men. He died for all, that He might arrest the immediate execution of the penalty of the law upon the whole of our apostate race....He was a propitiation effectually for the sins of his people, and sufficiently for the sins of the whole world. (143)

Although Hodge rejects the more speculative features of

(139) Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, p.323.

(140) Ibid, p.544.

(141) Chapter XI, Of Justification, III. (emphasis mine.)

(142) See Chapter VIII:v, Of Christ the Mediator, for a clear statement of the forensic character of the atonement.

(143) Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, pp.558-9. See Baxter's statement: 'Christ died for all, but not for all alike or equally.' EC, p.160.



Amyraldianism, his general exegetical position is no different from theirs. However much he viewed himself in the tradition of Owen and the Westminster divines, it is obvious that his position would not be endorsed by them.

If a discrepancy exists between the Calvinism of Hodge and that of Owen, the same must be said with regard to Robert L. Dabney and Owen. Like Hodge, whose *Systematic Theology* he criticised over the doctrine of the imputation of sin (144), Dabney rejected not only the commercial theory of the atonement but also Owen's type of extreme particularism (145). It is important to note that Dabney was not as antagonistic towards Amyraldianism (146) as Hodge professed to be, yet Professor Albert H. Freundt writes that Dabney 'championed the doctrines of Calvinism' (147). Dabney's exposition of John 3:16 has more affinity with Calvin's and Baxter's, than it does with Owen's. The text is not a statement about God's particular, electing love. It speaks of a much broader divine disposition:

The solution, then, must be in this direction, that the words, 'so loved the world', were not designed to mean the gracious decree of election, though other scriptures abundantly teach there is such a decree, but a propension of benevolence not matured into the volition to redeem, of which Christ's mission is a sincere manifestation to all sinners. (148)

- (144) See Discussions: Evangelical and Theological (1967 rep.), Vol. 1, pp.229f. For Dabney, see DAB.
- (145) See Dabney's discussion of the atonement in his Speech on Fusion with the united Synod, Discussions, Vol. 2, pp.305f. Unlike Owen, Dabney taught that the sins of all men were laid on Christ, quoting with approval the answer to Q. 37 of the Heidelberg Catechism: 'That he bore in his body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the universal human race, ibid, p.310.
- (146) See Discussions, Vol. , p.283, and Vol. 2, p.305.
- (147) Discussions, Vol. 1, p.viii.

If therefore Owen's position is representative of 'orthodox high-Calvinism, then it is manifest that the views of Chalmers, Hodge and Dabney indicate a decided 'shift' in an Amyraldian direction or, alternatively, a return to original Reformation Calvinism.

More recent scholarship demonstrates that only by perpetuating a rationalistic approach can Owen's type of view be sustained (149). Even Berkhof hesitates to equate 'world' with 'the elect', although he does suggest that the agape of John 3:16 is electing, rather than a general love (150). William Hendriksen is, like Berkhof, in the high-Calvinist tradition, yet in his observations on the New Testament usage of kosmos he does not equate 'world' with 'the elect' in the manner of Owen (151). The consensus appears to prove that the distinctive tenets of high-Calvinism have no exegetical validity. Only by offering violence to the textual data can Owen's type of view be sustained. As such, Wesley's exegesis will always appear more acceptable, until the particular aspects of redemption dealt with in other texts are considered. The Amyraldian position, in seeking to do full justice to both the particular and

(148) God's Indiscriminate Proposals of Mercy, in ibid, p.313. The high-Calvinist John Murray avoids the issue of numerical extent by giving 'world' a qualitative meaning, 'the world as sinful, estranged, and alienated from God'. However, even he is prepared to say that, from the standpoint of gospel proclamation 'we may say that Christ died for non-elect persons.' The Atonement and the Free Offer of the Gospel, BOI (1968), No. 58-59, p.29, and No. 60, p.27.

(149) See Great Texts of the Bible, ed. James Hastings (1912), (St. John I-XII), p.193. 'The true extent of the import of the word (world) may be seen in those other passages which assure us that there 'is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, and who tasted death for everyman.' 'But what about election. There is nothing in the text about it. God so loved the world - not a portion of the world - not the elect. The elect are only a part of the world and chosen out of it. But this love of God is world-wide for everybody, without a hint of election in it.'

general aspects of redemption will satisfy the minds of those who, recognising the fundamental antinomies of the situation, will be prepared to resist the temptation to allow a priori deduction rather than textually-based induction to settle the debate. (152)

Having considered the implications of John 3:16 at some length, it is sufficient to say that our findings cover most of the texts involving kosmos. However, I John 2:2 contains the added dimension of an explicit reference to the atonement. 'And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' The subject of propitiation has already been discussed, so our attention may be confined to holos o kosmos. Owen insists that the verse is not a statement about general redemption, but one about the provision of grace for believers throughout the world. He argues his view in the light of the apostle's intention in writing. 'For the aim and intention of the apostle in these words is to give consolation to believers against their sins and failings: 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.' (153) Furthermore, Christ is only an advocate for believers, to whom comfort alone is promised, described by John as the 'little children' who 'know the Father'. Owen

(150) Systematic Theology (1958 ed.), see pp.71, 114 and 396.

(151) Commentary on the Gospel of John (1959), p.79.

(152) Nineteenth century Anglican Calvinism was careful to avoid Owen's type of particularism. E. A. Litton wrote: 'The impression, however, after all remains, that the passages in question cannot be fully explained on (Owen's) hypothesis, and that Scripture does sometimes connect benefits with Christ's death which extend beyond the salvation of the elect, and affect the race.' Introduction to Dogmatic Theology (1882, 1892), (1960 rep.), p.234. The remarks of J. C. Ryle are even more pointed: 'Those who confine God's love exclusively to the elect appear to me to take a narrow and contracted view of God's character and attributes....I have long come to the conclusion that men may be more systematic in their statements than the Bible, and may be led into grave error by idolatrous veneration of a

continued/

then presses the point home: How can Christ be a propitiation for all and everyone? .

I cannot conceive how this can possibly make anything to the end proposed, or the consolation of believers; for what comfort can arise from hence to them, by telling them that Christ died for innumerable that shall be damned? Will that be any refreshment unto me which is common unto me with them that perish eternally? (154)

Owen argues that believers are called 'all nations' (rather than those gathered from all nations) and since only believers are the ones under consideration, the whole world must be restricted in sense to them. In short, holos o kosmos is no more than ekklesia katholike - the church universal, or the elect of God everywhere. Contextual considerations apart, it is basic to Owen's theology that Christ's intercession is limited to the elect. It is not therefore surprising that this idea, coupled with the alleged intention of John, obliges Owen to convert a general term into a particular one. Before Owen's view can be granted, certain questionable assumptions must be affirmed. His view therefore demands the following paraphrase:

If any believer sins, we the elect, have an advocate with the Father....He is the propitiation for our sins, and also for the sins of all the elect throughout the world.

It is highly questionable to suppose that John is seeking to administer comfort in this restricted manner. By saying 'If any man sin', John is pitching his encouragement at the level of someone

(152) continued/ system.' Expository Thoughts on the Gospels (1865), St. John, Vol. 1, p.159.

(153) DD, p.332.

(154) Ibid, p.333.

viewed as a sinful person rather than an elect believer. The doubts John is attempting to deal with are not removed by considerations of election, but of a provision of grace available for all men. I John 2:2 is stating the basis upon which anyone who confesses sin (I John 1:9) may be forgiven and cleansed. As the atonement is available for all, so Christ's intercession is available for all. None need be discouraged. This is arguably the most natural sense of the passage. Owen's point about being comforted on the same basis as those who eternally perish ignores the conditional nature of the gospel provision. John could not be more specific here. 'If we say that we have no sin....' (I John 1:8); 'If we confess our sins....' (v.9); 'If we say that we have not sinned....' (v.10); 'If any man sin....' (v.1). In other words, I John 2:2, like John 3:16, is a statement not about the absolute purposes of God, but the conditional promises of his grace. Because Owen is basically ill at ease with regard to the latter conception, his only alternative is to interpret such conditional passages in absolute terms.

We have already discovered that the dualistic scheme accounts for such passages as John 3:16 and I John 2:2 without sacrificing the biblical emphasis on election evident elsewhere. Calvin himself admits an intercession for all as well as an intercession for the elect (155) and the 'sufficient for all/ efficient for the elect'

(155) See Calvin on John 17:9.

formula (156) provides a more satisfactory solution than either Owen or Wesley provide. Having said this, there is nothing in Wesley's exposition which Calvin or Baxter would object to:

And he is the propitiation - The atoning sacrifice, by which the wrath of God is appeased. For our sins - who believe. And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world - Just as wide as sin extends, the propitiation extends also. (157)

Furthermore, Charles Wesley's conception of Christ's intercession is perfectly consistent with John Calvin's view of a dual intercession, by which 'any man' may find salvation:

There for me the Saviour stands;  
Shows His wounds and spreads His hands;  
God is love; I know, I feel;  
Jesus weeps, and loves me still. (159)

Charles Wesley's hymn on I John 2:2 expresses the same conviction regarding the atonement as his brother's Notes on the New Testament:

Father, if I have sinn'd, with Thee  
An Advocate I have:  
Jesus, the Just, shall plead for me;  
The sinner Christ shall save.

Pardon and peace in Him I find:  
But not for me alone.  
The Lamb was slain; for all mankind  
His blood did once atone. (159)

(156) Owen's exegesis of I John 2:2 has Calvin's support with regard to the apostle's intention, although he might have written as he does elsewhere. Speaking of the idea of universal salvation argued from this verse, Calvin says, 'Those who want to avoid this absurdity have said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world but effectively only for the elect....Although I allow the truth of this, I deny that it fits this passage. For John's purpose was only to make this blessing common to the church.' Comment, I John 2:2.

(157) Notes on I John 2:2. Wesley makes a similar set of observations on John 1:29. 'The Lamb of God....Who taketh away - Atoneth for. The sin - That is, all the sins. Of the world - Of all mankind. Sin and the world are of equal extent.' Here, Calvin is more characteristic. 'And when he says the sin of the world he extends this kindness indiscriminately to the whole human race....Now it is for us to embrace the blessing offered to all, that each may make up his mind that there is nothing to hinder him from finding reconciliation in Christ if only, led by faith, he comes to him.' Comment, John 1:29.

Wesley's overall account of the atonement is deficient in that its efficacy ultimately depends on the human will, and, for his part, Owen fails to perceive the gospel as a general, conditional provision for all mankind. The elements of truth expressed by both men are synthesised in the dualistic position, and Richard Baxter is careful to observe the balance implied by it in his exposition of I John 2:2:

For he is the propitiation for our sins by virtue of his sacrifice, now interceding for us in heaven: And he is a propitiation sufficient for the sins of the whole world (so far as that none of them shall be damned for want of a sufficient sacrifice, but only for want of accepting his grace) and actually effecting the pardon of all in the world, who believingly trust and accept him and his grace. (160)

Baxter asserts a limited efficacy in the atonement, at the same time as he asserts that it contains a general provision. To deny either truth is arguably incorrect, and it is equally arguable that I John 2:2 is giving expression to this dualistic conception of the biblical gospel. This 'Baxterian' view can be defended against a recent criticism of it by G. D. Long (161). This author objects to a 'generic' understanding of 'whole world'. Following Owen's observations of the biblical use of kosmos, Long makes the questionable assertion that neither Paul nor the other biblical writers 'mean all mankind generically in a salvation context'

(158) M.H.B. (1933), no. 358, v.4. The original says 'weep'.

(159) The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley, ed. G. Osborn (1869), Vol. 3, p.32.

(160) Paraphrase on I John 2:2.

(161) Definite Atonement (1977).

unless John's usage is the exception (162),. With reference to I John 5:19 'the whole world lieth in wickedness (or in the wicked one)', we are told that 'whole world' cannot mean all mankind absolutely.' This is an obvious truism, since a distinction is made within the verse between 'we' who are 'of God' and the 'whole world' meaning 'the others'. Like I John 2:2, I John 5:19 is assuming a 'them' and 'us' distinction, since the apostle was writing to a group of believers. But this obvious distinction entails no theological significance. Long asks that if 'the whole world' (for whom Christ has died in the 'modified Calvinist' view) is 'in wickedness', 'Can this be true of the believer who is in Christ?' (163) This question fails to observe that even the elect are part of the fallen kosmos, alienated from, and at enmity with, God, until they believe. It is towards the world thus understood that God displayed His love (John 3:16). As such, there is no problem in viewing Christ's death as having redemptive consequences for such a world, since this fact itself constitutes the gospel. There is therefore no contradiction in asserting that the atonement makes provision for that 'whole world' which 'is in wickedness'. It is from this 'world' that believers are eventually separated. Long's difficulty is solved by Paul's statement that 'Christ died for the ungodly.' (Romans 5:6)

(162) Ibid, p.89.

(163) Ibid, p.89.



Long then raises a logical objection to the 'modified Calvinist' view. 'The term 'whole world' cannot refer to all mankind generally in a salvation context, for the non-elect do not receive all or any of the gifts of saving grace which is assured to them if, in reality, Christ actually died for them.' (164) This is even more extreme than Owen, who did admit a doctrine of common grace, as distinct from special grace. As we have seen, Owen did not deny that common grace possesses a 'real tendency' towards salvation. Now, since he maintained that Christ only purchased grace, i.e. special grace, for the elect, he is obliged to say that common grace was not purchased in the atonement. If, as Owen elsewhere argues that all grace comes from Christ, then he is committed to saying that the atonement has a reference even to the non-elect. Unless Long is prepared to reject Owen's view of common grace, there is no difficulty, on the dualist view, in saying that Christ died for more than are actually saved.

Long also fails to grasp the dualistic account of both the propitiation of Christ's death and his intercession. He is correct to reject the view which says the former is universal and the latter limited, but neither Calvin nor Baxter hold this, neither were they obliged to do so. Long's citation of B. B. Warfield shows that they both have failed to understand that, whilst Calvin

(164) Ibid, p.90.

and Baxter see a correlation between the atonement and the intercession, both acts possess general and special aspects.

Long's next objection is related to grammatical usage. He criticises Norman F. Douty's The Death Christ Died (1972), where the author interprets John to mean that Christ's death has provided a potential or hypothetical propitiation for the whole world. Long insists that the text says Christ is (est) the propitiation for our sins. The provision is therefore actual, not hypothetical. in which case, since the apostle is not advocating an absolute universalism, 'whole world' must be given a restricted sense (165). But once it is admitted that, on the cross, something was actually accomplished antecedent to its application (166), there can be no justifiable objection to the point Douty is making. Even with regard to the elect in subsequent generations, it makes perfectly valid sense to say that the potential provision of the atonement has yet to find actual application in their experience.\* Even the apostle John speaks of the actual reception of forgiveness as conditional upon confession of sin, a form of words which implies a potential provision of grace, prior to its actual reception. If Long is prepared to pursue the line 'what does the text actually say?' it is true the word potential is not there. But it is equally true that the text does not say 'the church scattered

(165) Ibid, p.91. See Douty, op. cit., pp.33,86f.

(166) See James Denney, The Death of Christ (1951), p.85. 'The work of reconciliation....is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished, before the gospel is preached.'

**\*Note:** The use of the 'potential/actual' distinction is not being employed with any aristotelian overtones, but as a 'common sense' idea.

throughout all nations'. It does say, 'the whole world' - and Long's exegesis of this is question-begging.

The last objection raised by Long is concerned with the use of 'propitiation'. He denies that it has a reference wider than the number of the elect. This has been discussed earlier in this study, but suffice it to say here that 'propitiation' is a qualitative and not a quantitative idea. Therefore, the question of numerical extent is irrelevant to the nature of the atonement, unless one is going to argue for a thorough-going commercialism. The propitiatory sacrifice is applicable to all, even if, in the event, it is not applied to all. When 'modified Calvinists' argue that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world' they only assert that the atonement is a sufficient provision for all, not that all partake of such a provision. However, this provides the basis for the church's evangelistic activity: there really is something being 'offered'. As with Owen, Long is confronted with the problem of divine justice in punishing those who reject the gospel provision. Can the guilty be justly accused if they are condemned for rejecting what was never provided for them?

The last key statement in this group is II Corinthians 5:19. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' Owen's approach to this statement is

predictable, yet he insists that because Paul says that God 'hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ' (v.18), and that 'we' have been 'made the righteousness of God in him' (v.21), that the 'world' of v.19 must correlate with the 'us' of v.18 and the 'we' of v.21. 'Are these things true of all in the world?' asks Owen. Therefore 'by the world here can be meant none but elect believers....this whole world, which God in Christ reconcileth to himself, is a blessed, justified world.' (167) To refute the idea that Paul means the 'world generically', Owen argues that the reconciliation of which the apostle speaks is 'an effectual work'. This, we are told, is either absolute or conditional. If the former, then why are not all men actually saved? If the latter, then why is no condition mentioned by Paul? Owen rejects that 'the mind of the Holy Spirit' in this passage is to make this reconciliation dependent upon faith since such reconciliation necessarily includes faith, as given only to the elect.

Three things must be said in reply to Owen. Firstly, to argue that Paul ever speaks of the 'elect' as 'a world' is special pleading in the interests of a theological assumption. Owen is simply imposing his theory of a limited atonement upon otherwise plain statements, and adjusting their natural sense accordingly. Secondly, there is a condition implied in the process of reconciliation stated by Paul: 'we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye

(167) DD, p.339.

reconciled to God' (v.20). One may justly ask that if, as Owen argues, 'reconciliation' is an 'absolute' act of God, then why does Paul urge upon the Corinthians the need to be reconciled? On Owen's view of the passage, Paul is incoherent if he says in one breath 'God has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ' and then in the next, 'Be reconciled.' What more can be done by those so exhorted, if all has been accomplished absolutely? There is the suggested solution that Paul is calling those Corinthian believers who had lapsed into sin back to God, on the principle that daily sin requires daily pardon. Each confession implies a renewed reconciliation, a view subscribed to by Calvin (168). Thirdly, as has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the Greek katallage and the English reconciliation do not have identical meanings. There is more 'one-sidedness' in the Greek word, admitting a distinction between reconciliation offered and reconciliation received. In short, the atonement accomplishes something, which is then made the basis of the preaching of the gospel.

Like Owen, Wesley equates the 'us' of v.18 with the 'world' of v.19, but with very different intentions (169). He evidently considered that where this passage is concerned there was 'no contest', since he says very little about the implications of 'world'. He does make the crucial observation that the 'world'

(168) 'Christ did not suffer just to expiate our sins once, nor was the Gospel instituted only in order that the sins we committed before baptism should be forgiven us, but rather, since we sin every day, so by a daily forgiveness God receives us into His favour.' Comment, II Corinthians 5:20.

(169) Notes on II Corinthians 5:18.

to which the gospel is preached is simply that 'which was before at enmity with God'. (170) That the cross is the expression of a reconciling disposition in God, and that something was accomplished there to be offered in gospel proclamation is very evident in Charles Wesley's hymn on II Corinthians 5:20:

God, the offended God most High,  
Ambassadors to rebels sends;  
His messengers His place supply,  
And Jesus begs us to be friends.

Us, in the stead of Christ, they pray,  
Us, in the stead of God, intreat,  
To cast our arms, our sins, away,  
And find forgiveness at His feet.

Our God, in Christ! Thine embassy,  
And proffered mercy, we embrace;  
And gladly reconciled to Thee,  
Thy condescending goodness praise. (171)

Unlike Owen, Wesley considers the inevitable fact that some will reject this offered reconciliation (172). Indeed, Paul's very exhortation (v.20) must imply this. Owen must therefore find it difficult to make sense of this and it is significant that he does not comment on Paul's exhortation.

What is of particular interest here is Calvin's handling of II Corinthians 5:19. His exposition is a clear instance of that dualistic approach being proposed in this thesis. Calvin offers no violence to kosmos in the interests of election, as surely as he avoids suppressing election in the interests of universal

(170) Ibid.

(171) M.H.B. (1904), No.278.

(172) 'Yet our almighty Lord, and our eternal Judge, not only vouchsafes to offer these blessings, but invites us, entreats us, and, with the most tender importunity, solicits us, not to reject them.' Notes on II Corinthians 5:20.

atonement:

It is incontestable that Christ came for the expiation of the sins of the whole world....though reconciliation is offered to all through him, yet the benefit is peculiar to the elect....However, while I say it is offered to all, I do not mean that this embassy, by which on Paul's testimony (II Corinthians 5:18) God reconciles the world to himself, reaches to all, but that it is not sealed indiscriminately on the hearts of all to whom it comes so as to be effectual. (173)

Reflecting perfectly James Denney's point about the 'completeness' of the offered reconciliation (174), Calvin expounds Paul thus:

He says again that a commission to offer this reconciliation to us has been given to ministers of the Gospel....He says that as (Christ) once suffered, so now every day He offers the fruit of His suffering to us through the Gospel which He has given to the world as a sure and certain record of His completed work of reconciliation. (175)

It is obvious that Calvin did not conceive of a universal offer of salvation without a universal atonement. In this respect, Wesley is closer to Calvin than Owen is. However, as far as the broad Calvinist tradition is concerned, it was Baxter, and not Owen, who perpetuated the emphases of original Calvinism. Without making any concessions to the Arminian view of election, Baxter is careful to refute Owen's emasculation of II Corinthians 5:19: 'Verse 19 is mistaken by many, as if by (the world) were meant only (the elect) because reconciliation and not imputing trespasses are mentioned.' However, Baxter is not blind to the fact that, in a sense, reconciliation is not 'consummated' until it is possessed by

(173) The Eternal Predestination of God, pp.148-9.

(174) See note (163).

(175) Comment, II Corinthians 5:19 (emphasis mine).

the recipient:

Yet no man is actually (but only conditionally) possessed of pardon and reconciliation, till that condition be performed: Yet God was forgiving them on his part, and was not imputing sin and unworthiness of redemption to them, when he gave them a Saviour. And yet the work of the ministry remaineth, even to entreat men to believe and accept this pardon and reconciliation as offered; and it is then actually theirs, when they thus accept it. (176)

In other words, as with other features of this subject, an underlying dualism must be acknowledged as a fundamental hermeneutic principle. The doctrine of reconciliation demands a distinction between 'reconciliation offered' and 'reconciliation received'. One might suggest didomic reconciliation and dechomic reconciliation (177). Thus setting II Corinthians 5:19 in the wider context of the atonement, one may say 'all are atoned for didomically, but only some dechomically.' This, of course, simply develops Baxter's thought about conditional and actual possession. Common usage justifies this conception. 'It's yours for the taking' and 'It's yours by possession' are equally true propositions. If the various aspects of the atonement are viewed in this manner, two benefits accrue. (1) No doctrine is asserted at the expense of another and (2) the textual data is preserved inviolate. Neither Owen nor Wesley, for obviously different reasons, can provide these safeguards. The dualistic position can alone do this.

(176) Paraphrase on II Corinthians 5:19, Annotation II.

(177) Didomic from the Greek verb didomi, to give or offer and dechomic from the verb dechomai, to receive by deliberate choice.



C. This final sub-section is concerned with those verses which imply that some for whom Christ has died might perish (178). If plain language is to be interpreted in its grammatical sense, then the statements before us constitute the greatest objection to Owen's hypothesis and the clearest vindication of Wesley's. The fact that Owen's language borders on abuse might suggest a distinct sense of unease. He says that the 'wits' of 'the Arminians and their successors' are 'wonderfully luxuriant' and 'full of rhetorical strains' while they argue the fruitlessness of the blood of Christ in respect of the most for whom it was shed....' (179) Owen states his position with emphasis:

We deny, then, I say, that Christ, by the command of his Father, and with intention to make satisfaction for sins, did lay down his life for reprobates and them that perish. (180)

The two Pauline statements may be considered together, since they relate to the same problem. The apostle is contemplating the influence of a 'strong' believer's behaviour on a 'weak' brother. If the former feels quite uninhibited about eating meat originally used in pagan ceremonies, the latter might entertain scruples in doing so. If the 'weak' brother sees the 'strong' brother confidently disregarding the pagan associations of the meat, then he might be tempted to think less of the dangers of paganism. Since he seemingly lacks the ability to discriminate between the intrinsic

(178) Romans 14:15; I Corinthians 8:11; II Peter 2:1.

(179) DD, p.359.

(180) Ibid, p.360.

innocence of the meat and the pagan practices associated with it, he might infer from the 'strong' believer's action that one is as innocent as the other. The net result might be an involvement with paganism and an eventual denial of Christ. Thus Paul says to the 'strong' believer, 'if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died (Romans 14:15). 'And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? (I Corinthians 8:11). The natural sense of the verses would appear to be as follows:

1. Some actions may be intrinsically legitimate, yet potentially offensive.

2. One Christian's example can affect the behaviour and spiritual welfare of another, either beneficially or detrimentally.

3. Because Christ loved the 'weak' brother so as to die for him, the 'strong' believer should be equally concerned to act in a compassionate and responsible manner towards him.

4. Negligence on the part of the 'strong' believer could result in the spiritual death of one for whom Christ has died.

Conclusion: Notwithstanding the fact that Christ has died for them, some might perish everlastingly as a result of such negligence.

Owen emphatically denies the conclusion. Indeed, his particularism would not allow him any alternative. He is therefore obliged to alter the sense of Paul's exhortation. 'Though the one

could not perish in respect of the event, the other might sinfully give occasion of perishing in respect of a procuring cause. (181) In which case, the danger of which Paul speaks is not as real as might appear. Owen does not deny that some might perish who, in the 'judgement of charity', are regarded as 'brothers' when they are not. In other words, if a 'brother' is an elect believer, no apparently irresponsible action on the part of the 'strong' believer could place the 'weaker' brother's salvation in doubt. If he does 'perish' then he was not one of those for whom Christ died. The only conclusion one can draw from Owen's exegesis is that Paul's fears on behalf of the weak brother were utterly without foundation. To add to the confusion, Owen rejects the very basis of the apostle's concern. 'That by perishing here is understood eternal destruction and damnation, I cannot apprehend. (182)

Understandably, Owen's exegesis is totally unsatisfactory. He seems to be at his most vulnerable here, since all his critical acumen appears to escape him. He is seemingly unaware that Paul uses the same verb apollumi (to perish or despoil) as appears in John 3:16. There can be no doubt that the apostle intends to convey the danger of eternal destruction. It is equally evident that the same apostle who taught the reality of predestination, did not enervate the notion of human responsibility as Owen effectively

(181) Ibid, p.360.

(182) Ibid, p.361.

does in the present instance. Even Paul did not discount the possibility that he might prove 'a castaway' (adokimos) (I Corinthians (9:27)). This only conflicts with predestination until it is realised that within the process of divine determination, human volition is an essential if not a finally significant ingredient. Only those are predestined who persevere, notwithstanding that even perseverance is a matter of grace (Philippians 2:12,13). What applies in personal salvation applies also in the present consideration. The believer is responsible before God in the matter of his own salvation, and also in the sense specified by Paul, for the salvation of his brother. Negligence can have eternal consequences in both respects (183). It is clear that the biblical teaching does not ascribe a person's perishing merely to non-election (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:41f). So, if a brother perished, the irresponsibility of others is not to be viewed as a fiction, but as sinfully real as the actions of those who effected the otherwise divinely determined death of Christ (Acts 2:23). This is another way of asserting that in the incomprehensible matter of divine determination versus human action, it is a case of 'both/and', not 'either/or'. Applying this principle to the present case, a 'perishing brother' would, in the act of perishing, certainly reveal that he was not a true believer in the first place (184), but

(183) Calvin is strikingly emphatic here: 'Also we ought to have good care of those that have been redeemed with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we see souls which have been so precious to God go to perdition, and we make nothing of it, that is to despise the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Sermons on Ephesians, p.521.

(184) The parable of the sower (Matthew 13) is surely relevant here.

that would not absolve the irresponsible believer from 'sinning against Christ'. (I Corinthians 8:12) By raising the question of whether the 'brother' who might perish is really a brother, Owen 'shifts' the burden of responsibility from the 'strong' believer to the will of God. The validity of any believer's profession cannot therefore constitute a 'rule of thumb'. Paul argues that such knowledge is ultimately God's alone (II Timothy 2:19). In a sense, all believers are 'visible professors'. It is even arguable that the 'strong brother' might not be a true believer, in his obvious failure to act charitably (James 2:14f; I John 3:10). The apostle can only mean that the 'weak' brother must be viewed as a real believer, otherwise the strength of his exhortation possesses no significance.

Predictably, John Wesley provides a straightforward comment on Romans 14:15:

If thy brother is grieved - That is, wounded, led into sin. Destroy not him for whom Christ died - So we see, he for whom Christ died may be destroyed. With thy meat - Do not value thy meat more than Christ valued his life. (185)

On I Corinthians 8:11, Wesley says 'We see, Christ died even for them that perish.' (186) It is significant that Wesley does not elaborate. As an opponent of predestination, it is sufficient for him to be brief. Since the atonement is universal, and not all will be saved, then it follows logically that some do perish

(185) Notes, Romans 14:15.

(186) Notes, I Corinthians 8:11.

for whom Christ died. 'Q. E. D.'

As with John 3:16, the passages before us contain no reference to election. If Owen is correct, then Paul, who does teach election elsewhere, is arguably inconsistent. In making election conditional, Wesley has eliminated the potential threat to his view of the question. In other words, the problem is how to acknowledge the full force of the apostle's words without explaining election away. This is Baxter's exposition of the apostle's thought:

And whereas Christ died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord of the dead and living, and hath a right of propriety unto all, having purchased for them a conditional gift of salvation, thou wilt now rob Christ of his right, and them of their salvation, by the abuse of thy pretended knowledge. (187)

In Baxter's view, Paul is not saying that the ultimate efficacy of the atonement is in doubt. The stress is on the universality of the atonement, as a conditional provision for all. Since no believer can be sure if his brother is elect, he cannot be expected to view the situation from that standpoint. However, if Christ has, in Baxter's words, 'purchased' for all 'a conditional gift of salvation', then the 'strong' believer must view the 'weaker' brother in the light of Christ's universal provision. Whether or not the 'weak' brother's profession is valid is quite a separate question, and foreign to the apostle's purpose. By speaking of the

(187) Paraphrase, I Corinthians 8:11. Charles Hodge is much closer to Baxter than he is to Owen: 'As Christ's death has benefited the whole world, prolonged the probation of men, secured for them innumerable blessings, provided a righteousness sufficient and suitable for all, it may be said that he died for all.' A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1958 rep.), p.149.

danger of 'robbing' a brother of his salvation, Baxter, like Wesley, does justice to Paul's exhortation. Baxter himself cites Calvin on I Corinthians 8:11 as evidence for universal atonement, where the reformer says:

This is a memorable saying, from which we learn how precious the salvation of our brothers ought to be to us, and not only that of all, but of each individual, in view of the fact that the blood of Christ was poured out for each one. (188)

It is all the more remarkable that Calvin, whose belief in the ultimate perseverance of the elect is well known, should then say:

If the soul of every weak person costs the price of the blood of Christ, anyone, who, for the sake of a little bit of meat, is responsible for the rapid return to death of a brother redeemed by Christ, shows just how little the blood of Christ means to him. (189)

The result of this discussion can be stated simply. The apostle is questioning the profession of the 'strong' believer. How can he be acting in a brotherly manner since, by his action, he is encouraging the destruction of the 'weaker' brother, when Christ died to rescue him from that very destruction? It is obvious that Calvin and Baxter, as well as Wesley, provide a more consistent exposition of Paul's thought than Owen is able to do. The premiss of a universally sufficient atonement makes more sense of Paul's language than does the exclusive particularism advocated by Owen.

(188) Comment, I Corinthians 8:11. For Baxter, see CT, Bk. 2, p.51.

(189) Ibid.

The final text to be considered is II Peter 2:1. 'But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.' This statement is not quite as straightforward as the others, for a number of reasons. Accordingly, Owen says 'All things here, as to any proof of the business in hand, are exceedingly dark, uncertain and doubtful

(190) Owen's understanding of the text may be set out as follows:

1. It is uncertain that by 'Lord' is meant the 'Lord Christ' since the Greek is despotes, rather than the usual kurios.

2. It is uncertain that the 'buying' of which the text speaks is referring to eternal redemption or some temporal deliverance.

3. It is uncertain whether the apostle is describing the persons according to their actual spiritual status or simply relating their own opinion of themselves.

Owen makes the only hint of a reference to 'common grace' in the Death of Death when he says that nothing is said of the godliness of the 'false teachers'. They are said to possess only 'common gifts of light and knowledge, which Christ hath purchased for many for whom he did not make his soul a ransom.' (191)

Owen insists that despotes describes a 'Lord or Master' who has servants in subjection to him. Since Christ is described in

(190) DD, p.362.

(191) Ibid, p.362.



more 'endearing terms in his relationship to his church, it is doubtful whether he is intended in II Peter 2:1. It is difficult to imagine what Owen is attempting to distinguish, since kurios is frequently employed in the New Testament to express Christ's authority over the church (192). It is true that despotes is used much less than kurios and, when it is used, it generally does not refer to Christ. It usually denotes God the Father, e.g. Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; Revelation 6:10. In II Timothy 2:21, despotes is translated 'master' and, in view of the reference to Christ in verse 19, despotes arguably refers to him. Hendriksen is quite explicit here. 'The 'cleansed sinner' is now 'very useful' to his Master.....namely, Jesus Christ.'(193) Therefore, since despotes means one possessing absolute authority it would not be incorrect to use the title of Christ. This is derived from his divine sonship as well as his headship over the church, and E. M. B. Green is persuaded that in II Peter 2:1, the reference is to Christ (194). Guthrie is also convinced that this is the case (195).

Owen further denies that the 'purchase' referred to in the text has any redemptive connotations. He points out that the word translated 'bought' is agorazo and not lutroo, which 'signifieth primarily the buying of things' (196). Wherever agorazo is used

(192) See Guthrie, op. cit., p.301. See also Peter Toon, Jesus Christ is Lord (1977).

(193) Commentary on I & II Timothy and Titus (1959), p. 271.

(194) II Peter Reconsidered (1961). 'The Christology of II Peter, which Käsemann calls degenerate, is certainly a very exalted one. It is in relation to Him alone that God is called Father (1:17). He is the despotes of His followers (2:1) whose entole (commandment) they must obey (2:21).' Op. cit., p.16.

(195) Guthrie says: 'The text speaks of 'false prophets who were denying the Lord who bought them. The denial is seen at its worst when considered against the cost of their redemption. They were turning their backs against all that Jesus had come to do on their behalf.' Op. cit., p.480.

redemptively, the price of redemption is correspondingly used, e.g. I Corinthians 6:20 'bought with a price' and Revelation 5:9 'thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood'. In Owen's view, II Peter 2:1 only signifies a non-redemptive acquisition.

Leon Morris points out (197) that the original meaning of agorazo was 'to acquire, or buy in the forum'. It is also found in Hellenistic Greek usage in connection with the purchase of slaves. It was easy for such an idea to be incorporated into Christian usage, and it is thought that I Corinthians 6:20 is an instance of this. In I Corinthians 7:22,23, we also read 'he that was called, being free, is Christ's slave. Ye were bought with a price....' Morris further points out that the apostle is drawing attention to something other than the freedom of the redeemed. He is emphasising that, paradoxically, those set free are not free to do as they wish (198). Whenever therefore believers are described in these terms, redemption is presupposed. Although agorazo does not, strictly speaking, mean 'acquired by ransom' it arguably presupposes redemption when used of believers. The stronger form exagorazo is used in Galatians 3:13 in direct connection with the death of Christ. Here, the usage simply makes explicit what is implied in the weaker form. Just because agorazo is used in II Peter 2:1, without any specific reference to redemption, this fact in no way proves a non-redemptive kind of acquisition. Everything is not

(196) DD, P.363.

(197) The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross (1960 ed.), p.50f.

(198) Ibid, p.51.

said in one text. The word is used to emphasise Christ's ownership, which in turn assumes the payment of a price. Though the false prophets had been bought they would deny the master who made the purchase. Peter's language is simply stressing that the false prophets, having once professed Christ, were obligated to their master to declare the truth. Teaching heresy was inconsistent with such an obligation. Owen argues that in II Peter 2:1 agorazo only signifies a deliverance from external corruption, in which case they were merely 'acquired' to serve God's sovereign purposes (in the manner of which Paul writes in Romans 9:20-24). If this were so, even this degree of deliverance required a measure of grace, which in turn presupposes the need of the atonement to purchase such grace.

G. D. Long has attempted to justify Owen's type of exegesis. He claims that Peter intentionally alludes to the phrase 'thy father hath bought thee', in Deuteronomy 32:6, where the idea of acquisition is implied (199). Such acquisition, we are told, was based upon God's sovereign right. It must therefore be asked, what was the basis on which God acquired' Israel? Was it by any other means than a ransom price? What significance does Long attach to the Passover with all its typical allusions to Christ's redemption? Jehovah did not merely claim them by right of sovereignty. They

(199) Op. cit., p.76f.

were obliged to live as his people because he had redeemed them. It is on this basis that Moses rebuked the rebellious nation for its ingratitude, see Deuteronomy 31:27. It makes no sense to suggest that agorazo can be dissociated from its redemptive connotations. It is surely arguable that Long and Owen are making much out of little. II Peter 2:1 should be understood thus: 'The sovereign Lord Christ who acquired them as his property....' where the redemption price is presupposed (200). Peter therefore used agorazo rather than lutroo, not to imply a non-redemptive acquisition but to stress Christ's right of ownership and the obligations consequent upon those who had professed him. Peter is not discussing the nature of redemption but the obligations of the redeemed.

Such false prophets would clearly be punished for denying Christ whose grace they had tasted (see II Peter 2:20-22), a thought clearly expressed in Jude 4 '....ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Master, God (despoten Theon), and Lord (kurios), Jesus Christ.' (Granville-Sharpe version) Put differently, these men had been partakers of 'common grace' if not 'special grace' and, in that respect could be viewed as those for whom Christ died. As we have seen, Owen partially concedes this point.

In view of this discussion, Wesley's exegesis, for all its

(200) 'The idea of agorazein is akin to that of lutrousthai, and the New Testament in other places emphasises the fact that we are bought with a price (I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23)....The passage (II Peter 2:1) takes for granted the common faith of Christians in this connection, but does not directly contribute to its elucidation.' James Denney, op. cit., p.64. 'Having been bought by the master, they were His and their lives should have been lived to His glory, and it is only against this background that their sin can be seen in all its vile-ness.' Leon Morris, op. cit., p.54.

brevity, may not be disqualified:

The Lord that bought them - With his own blood. Yet these very men perish everlastingly. Therefore Christ bought even them that perish. (201)

However, the basic distinction Wesley fails to make in this kind of instance is made by Baxter. He also wastes no time in rejecting Owen's view (202) that the false prophets merely claimed that they were 'bought':

Christ is called The Lord that bought them, not because they falsely professed that he bought them, as some say, but because he purchased and made them a deed of gift of Christ, pardon and life, to be theirs on condition of believing acceptance. And because they should not perish for want of a sufficient sacrifice for sin. (203)

Again, Baxter cites Calvin on II Peter 2:1 in support of his view (204). The reformer evidently felt no embarrassment in suggesting that some will perish for whom Christ died. After linking II Peter 2:1 with Jude 4, Calvin says:

Christ redeemed us to have us as a people separated from all the iniquities of the world, devoted to holiness and purity. Those who throw over the traces and plunge themselves into every kind of licence are not unjustly said to deny Christ, by whom they were redeemed....He goes on to say that swift destruction comes upon them so that others do not involve themselves with them. (205)

In other words, Calvin writes as he does on the assumption of a universal atonement. He applies this general truth to this particular case. II Peter 2:1 is a special instance where such a view of the atonement applies.

(201) Notes on II Peter 2:1.

(202) DD, p.364.

(203) Paraphrase on II Peter 2:1, note 2.

(204) CT, Bk. 2, p.51.

(205) Comment, II Peter 2:1 (emphasis mine). R. C. H. Lenski's comment illustrates, by way of a sequence of errors, the traditional ignorance associated with Calvin's 'Calvinism'. 'Here we have an adequate answer to Calvin's limited atonement: the Sovereign, Christ, bought with his blood not only the elect but also those who go to perdition. Calvin does

It may be confidently concluded that, whatever deficiencies are possessed by Wesley's theology with regard to the ultimate efficacy of the atonement, his exegesis of most of the disputed texts has more affinity with Reformation Calvinism than Owen's does. As for Owen, there is little, if any, textual evidence for his variety of Calvinism. Only by imposing a preconceived theological straight-jacket upon the textual data can his exegesis be granted. Whatever tendencies are discernible in Arminianism on the subject of the atonement, it is obvious that Owen's theology on this subject possesses tendencies equally inimical to the presentation of the gospel. Hypercalvinism proper may trace its origin to the high-Calvinism of Owen, whose Death of Death remains the classical statement of the doctrine of limited atonement. Without pretending that Baxter's theology is flawless, his fundamental view of the atonement - a via media between Owen's position on one hand, and Wesley's on the other - must commend itself as an acceptable alternative. It is, in a sense, the 'best of both worlds' - in the way the general and particular features of the biblical evidence are viewed as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In the different ways in which Owen and Wesley over-emphasise one aspect of the case to the exclusion of the other, they may both be styled 'semi-Calvinists' (206). Seen

(205) continued/ not accept this epistle as canonical; in his extensive commentary on the New Testament it is not treated. May this clause, perhaps, have been a reason for this omission? The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude (1966), p.305.

(206) William Ames' oft quoted remark (De Conscientia (1632), IV, iv, q.4) that Arminianism 'is not strictly heresy but a dangerous error tending toward heresy' may justly be applied to high-Calvinism. If Wesley's error leads to the 'Pelagian heresy', Owen's error leads to the 'Hypercalvinist heresy'.

in the context of this study, the views of John Calvin himself must be regarded as 'moderate'. It is something of a 'bonus' to find the reformer's convictions being in harmony with the findings of the present study. Remembering Richard Baxter's concern to trace a path of conciliation between the contending emphases of Arminianism and high-Calvinism, he also is in great measure vindicated. Alexander Gordon has justly concluded:

Baxter's Calvinism differed from that of the Westminster divines, simply by the purity of its adhesion to the original type, unaffected by the anti-Arminian reaction. His Calvinism, like that of the framers of some of the Anglican formularies, admitted, nay insisted, that our Lord, by His death, had redeemed all mankind, a position not endorsed by the divines of Dort (207) or of Westminster, yet never without its advocates among holders of Calvinistic doctrine, nor of itself calculated to bring Baxter under the suspicion of looking in the Arminian direction.... (208)

Baxter's position, being a basic re-statement of Calvin's own theology, must qualify as the ameliorated Calvinism for which Sell pleads (209). In short, Calvin's 'Calvinism' is the true via media between the very extremes represented by Owen and Wesley.

Even more recent statements of the particularist position have discarded many of the extreme ideas advocated by John Owen. In keeping with the sentiments of Calvin, Baxter and other 'moderate' Calvinists, rather than those of Owen, R. B. Kuiper writes:

There is, I fear, an additional reason of quite another kind for the unpopularity of the doctrine of the particular atonement. It lies not in Calvinism but in Calvinists, not in the Reformed faith but in some of its teachers; and it is

(207) Gordon incorrectly assumes that 'Dort' Calvinism is as 'high' as 'Westminster' Calvinism. Baxter saw his own views as consistent with 'Dort' Calvinism, vide supra, p.40.

(208) PHSE, Vol. 1, No. 2, May, 1915, p.35.

(209) Op. cit., pp.23,98.

not complimentary to them. Seldom does one hear from a Reformed pulpit an accurate statement of this doctrine. It is not at all unusual for Reformed preachers, in attempting to state it, to content themselves with saying that Christ died only for the elect. But that presentation requires both explanation and amplification. By itself it falls short of doing justice either to the Scriptural data bearing on the matter or to its historic formulation in the creeds of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches and the writings of the ablest Reformed theologians. (210)

These are the words of an avowed particularist, who not only fails to see a difference between the views of Calvin and later Calvinists, but who uncritically imagines that Owen's sentiments concur with his. Having said this, Kuiper's cautionary comments form a fitting summary of much that has been written here. The final evaluation of the issues will be reserved for the main conclusion.

(210) For whom did Christ Die? (1959, 1982 ed.), p.6.



II

Trust and Obedience:

The Nature of Justification

1: The Doctrine of Justification: the Reformation background.

The judgement of the Reformed churches is herein known unto all.....Especially the Church of England is in her doctrine express as unto the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, both active and passive, as it is usually distinguished. This hath been of late so fully manifested out of her authentic writings, - that is the articles of religion, and books of homilies, and other writings publicly authorised, - that it is altogether needless to give any farther demonstration of it....Wherefore, in what I have to offer on this subject, I shall not in the least depart from the ancient doctrine of the Church of England....

Dr. John Owen, The Doctrine of Justification by Faith (1677) (1)

Is justification more or less than God's pardoning and accepting a sinner through the merits of Christ? ....It does not appear that one word is spoken here (i.e. Romans 5: 20,21) about imputed righteousness; neither in the passages cited in the next page from the Common Prayer and the Articles. In the Homily likewise that phrase is not found at all, and the main stress is laid on Christ's shedding his blood. Nor is the phrase (concerning the thing there is no question) found in any part of the Homilies.

John Wesley, Preface to a Treatise on Justification (1764) (2)

Despite the important differences between John Owen and John Wesley with regard to the doctrines of election and the atonement, the doctrine of justification by faith was considered as axiomatic in their respective conceptions of the gospel. For both men, the justification of sinners by God's free grace was the very quintessence

(1) Works, Vol. 5, p.164.

(2) Works, Vol. 10, pp.305,316. See George R. Bolster, Wesley's Doctrine of Justification, EQ, April, 1952, pp.144-155.

of Christianity. They both agreed with Martin Luther that justification by faith is articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae - the doctrine of a standing or a falling church. J. I. Packer would include both Owen and Wesley when he writes that 'justification by faith has been the central theme of the preaching in every movement of revival and religious awakening in Protestantism from the Reformation to the present day.' (3)

Notwithstanding a fundamental unanimity, it is evident from the quotations given above that important differences existed between Owen and Wesley. It is particularly interesting to note a common appeal to the teaching of the Church of England. Both divines assumed that Reformation Anglicanism enshrined their own doctrinal conceptions. It is the purpose of this introduction to investigate the evidence on which Owen and Wesley base their conflicting conclusions. This will be done by considering five key questions, concerning which Owen and Wesley give significantly different answers, viz:

1. Is justification the same thing as pardon of sin?
2. Is justification complete at conversion?
3. Is the believer's faith imputed as his saving righteousness?
4. Is the believer's obedience a condition of salvation?
5. Is the sola fide principle a Scriptural one?

These questions are not new ones. They arose in the minds of

(3) Introductory Essay to James Buchanan, The Doctrine of Justification (1961 rep.), p.2. See also, A. M. Stibbs, Justification by Faith: the Reinstatement of the Doctrine Today, EQ, April, 1952.

Protestant theologians because of the need to avoid pre-Reformation legalism on one hand, and post-Reformation antinomianism on the other. It may be safely argued that both Owen and Wesley were concerned to present the gospel without sacrificing either the doctrine of grace or the doctrine of holiness. How they both preserved the tension between these complementary biblical emphases is to be assessed in due course. Both men obviously considered that Reformation theology was a significant point of reference. Whilst the eventual concern of this thesis is to attempt an evaluation of the issues from a strictly exegetical standpoint, it is important as well as interesting to clarify the position of the Reformers, both English and continental. This much is true: Owen and Wesley cannot both be right in their reading of the Reformers. This introductory survey is not intended as an exhaustive one, but as an attempt to provide an outline of the views to which Owen and Wesley both appeal.

#### 1. Justification and Pardon

It is an interesting fact that Owen's appeal to Reformation Anglicanism is not accompanied by documentary evidence. On the other hand, Wesley was careful to document his claims in a number of his publications. It was in November, 1738, that he 'began more narrowly to inquire what the doctrine of the Church of England is, concerning the much controverted point of justification by faith..' (4)

(4) Journal for November 12th., 1738, II, p.101.

The result of these enquiries was The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith, and Good Works, Extracted from the Homilies of the Church of England (5), which Wesley published that year.

Article XI of the Church of England, Of the Justification of Man makes reference to the 'Homily of Justification' (6). Thomas Cranmer, the author of the homily, asserts that 'every man of necessity is constrained to seek for another righteousness or justification, to be received at God's own hands, that is to say, the forgiveness of his sins and trespasses....'(7) After denying that even a 'lively faith' has any intrinsic meritorious value, we are then told that Faith's role is to direct the sinner to Christ 'for to have only by him remission of our sins, or justification' (8). It is plain that 'justification' and 'forgiveness' are seen as equivalent terms, and that 'forgiveness of sin', by itself, is to be taken 'for our perfect and full justification' (9). Wesley's utterances are consistent with the Homily. In Justification by Faith (1746), he declared that 'the plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins' (10). On the other hand, Owen considered it a mistake to say that 'remission of sin and justification are the same, or that justification consisteth only in the remission of sin....' (11) Owen believed that justification involved pardon plus an imputation of Christ's active

(5) A tenth edition was published in 1748. See Albert Outler, op.cit., pp.121f, and also J. T. Tomlinson, The Prayer Book, Articles and Homilies (1897).

(6) A Sermon of the Salvation of Mankind, by only Christ our Saviour, from Sin and Death everlasting in Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be read in Churches (1822 ed.). Hereafter Homilies.

(7) Homilies, p.25.

(8) Ibid, p.32.

(9) Ibid, p.25.

(10) Works, Vol. 5, p.52.

righteousness to the believer, the latter being a distinct element from pardon itself. As shall be seen, Wesley objects to this conception of imputation on the grounds that if Christ's active holiness is regarded as the sinner's own, then the sinner is no more in need of pardon than Christ himself was. Wesley argues furthermore that antinomianism becomes unavoidable. The believer has no more need of inherent righteousness than pardon, if Owen's view is correct.

It can be shown that the Reformers generally expressed themselves in the manner of the Homily. William Tyndale wrote that 'when I say, God justifieth us, understand thereby, that God for Christ's sake, merits, and deservings only, receiveth us into his mercy, favour and grace, and forgiveth our sins....' (12) Elsewhere Tyndale speaks of faith 'that justifieth, or receiveth forgiveness of sins.' (13) Hugh Latimer asks 'Wherein standeth our righteousness? Answer: in that, that God forgiveth unto us our unrighteousness.' (14) Similarly he asserts that 'our sins must be remedied by pardon, by remission: other righteousness we have not, but forgiving of our unrighteousness.' (15)

- (11) Op. cit., p.271. A. H. Strong agrees with Owen. 'Justification is more than remission or acquittal.' Systematic Theology, p.475. However, he quotes from a tract by Anselm to illustrate that the New Testament doctrine of justification was not entirely eclipsed during the Middle Ages. But there is not the least hint of Strong's view in Anselm's statement, (p.471).
- (12) Prologue upon the Epistle to the Romans in Doctrinal Treatises (Parker Society), (1848), p.508. See also Philip Edgecumbe Hughes, Theology of the English Reformers (1965), pp.45f.
- (13) Prologue upon the Epistle of James, Ibid, p.525.
- (14) Sermons (Parker Society) (1844), p.415.
- (15) Ibid, p.528. Latimer appears to contradict the simplicity of these statements by saying elsewhere that Christ 'giveth unto us his holiness, righteousness, justice, fulfilling of the law....' (p.330), as if justification were more than pardon. But his statement can be understood to mean that Christ's total obedience became the meritorious basis for forgiveness or

John Hooper explains that 'To be justified by faith in Christ is as much to say as, we obtain remission of sin, and are accepted into the favour of God, by the merits of Christ.' (16) '....justification is a free remission of sin, and acceptance into the favour of God, for Christ's merits....' (17) In his Confession of Faith, Hooper clearly assumes an equivalence between justification and forgiveness (18). Even though, in an isolated instance, he speaks of Christ's 'justice and perfection' which God 'imputeth and communicateth with us by faith' he clearly understands by such 'perfection' 'the merits of Christ's death' whereby 'we....obtain this remission of sin' (19). Elsewhere, he specifically writes of 'justification or remission of sin' (20). Writing at a slightly later period, John Jewel clearly equates forgiveness of sins with justification. 'There is no one mortal creature which can be justified by his own deserts in God's sight: and therefore that our only succour and refuge is to fly to the mercy of our Father by Jesu Christ, and assuredly to persuade our minds, that He is the obtainer of forgiveness of our sins....' (21)

From the examples given, it would appear that Owen has entirely misread the Anglican Reformers and that, according to his view, they must be mistaken in their views of justification. Turning to the continental Reformers, the evidence is equally persuasive. In his

(15) continued/ justification. Otherwise, Wesley's objection applies, viz, imputed righteousness in any sense other than pardon makes pardon itself unnecessary.

(16) Early Writings of Bishop Hooper (Parker Society)(1848), pp.49-50.

(17) Ibid, p.59.

(18) Later Writings of Bishop Hooper (Parker Society)(1852), pp.58-59.

(19) Early Writings, op. cit., p.51.

(20) Ibid, p.264.

(21) Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae in Works (Parker Society)(1848), Vol. 3, p.66.

Commentary on Galatians, Luther expounded the 'solid rock which we call the doctrine of justification' in identical terms. He equates 'Christian righteousness' with the 'forgiveness of sins', that 'passive righteousness which is the righteousness of grace, mercy and forgiveness of sins' (22). Article IV of the Augsburg Confession (1530) assumes the same equivalence between justification and pardon (23).

John Calvin's statements are quite explicit on this matter. 'Justification by faith is reconciliation with God and....this consists solely in the remission of sins.' (24) 'God justifies by pardoning.' (25) '....this justification may be termed in one word the remission of sins.' (26) 'Righteousness....consists in forgiveness of sins.' (27) 'Thus the Apostle connects forgiveness of sins with justification in such a way as to show that they are altogether the same....' (28) In Calvin's view, the Apostle Paul used 'justification' as an equivalent term to 'pardon' or 'forgiveness of sin'.(29)

There can be no doubt that Calvin's position has been something of an embarrassment to later Reformed theologians who argue, like Owen, that justification is more than pardon (30). William Cunningham evades the thrust of the evidence given above by insisting that Calvin never intended to deny that justification involved the imputation of Christ's righteousness as a distinct element from

(22) A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, ed. Philip S. Watson (1953), pp.16,21-23. See G. W. Bromily, The Doctrine of Justification in Luther, EQ, April, 1952, pp.91-100.

(23) Appendix to Gilbert Burnet, An Exposition of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England, ed. J. R. Page (1841), p.522.

(24) Institutes, III:11:21.

(25) Ibid, III:11:11.

(26) Ibid, III:11:21.

(27) Ibid, III:11:22.

(28) Ibid, III:11:22.



forgiveness (31). Calvin was, of course, in common with all the Reformers, arguing that justification was a forensic act rather than an infusion of grace as the Roman theologians had taught. However, it is doubtful whether Cunningham can cite any evidence to support his view of Calvin. He does specifically refer to Calvin's comment on I Corinthians 1:30 as evidence. Calvin writes 'Paul says that (Christ) has been made unto us for righteousness. By this he means that in his name we are accepted by God, because he atoned for our sins by his death, and his obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. For since the righteousness of faith consists in remission of sin and free acceptance, we obtain both through Christ.' Cunningham also refers, as do Charles Hodge (32) and J. I. Packer (33), to two other statements where Calvin says that 'justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ' and that 'man is not just in himself, but that the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation....' (34)

It is rather obvious that the theologians referred to are concerned to expound Calvin in terms of subsequent doctrinal developments. The assumption is made that Calvin's view is virtually identical with Owen's. If they are correct, then Calvin is ostensibly

(29) '....God justifies men by not imputing their sin. By these words we also learn that righteousness for Paul is nothing other than the remission of sins.' Comment, Romans 4:6-8. 'This verse (Acts 13:39) makes it quite clear what the word justifying means everywhere else, viz, to be delivered and forgiven.' Comment, Acts 13:38-41.

(30) L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology (1958 ed.), p.514.

(31) The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation (1967 rep.) p.403.

(32) Systematic Theology (1960 ed.), Vol. 3, pp.133-134.

(33) The Doctrine of Justification in Development and Decline among the Puritans in Puritan Conference Report (1969), p.21 (n.11).

(34) Institutes, III:11:2,23.

involved in a self-contradiction. However, assuming that Calvin's detailed discussion of these matters in the Institutes (where these apparently conflicting statements occur together) possesses some degree of consistency, it is not difficult to find a solution. Calvin teaches that Paul means by 'the imputation of righteousness' nothing more than the 'forgiveness of sins'. (35) They are virtually equivalent terms. Calvin did not teach that imputation involved the active righteousness of Christ, a fact even admitted by Cunningham (36). This might make Calvin appear to be repeating himself in the statements in question (quote 34), but the twin halves of the statements are merely negative and positive ways of expressing the same truth. The facts remain that it was Theodore Beza (37), Calvin's successor at Geneva, who taught what has become the 'orthodox' Calvinist position. (38) This has proved a significant and far reaching departure from Calvin's theology (39), and the implications of this will be investigated in due course. As for Calvin, he simply taught that Christ's passive righteousness was imputed, viz, the obedience of his death (40), and that such is the ground of pardon or justification. It is true that he occasionally speaks of both pardon and acceptance, but the latter is merely a logically necessary consequence of the former. He never teaches that, since justification

(35) Ibid, III:11:6.

(36) Op. cit., p.404.

(37) See Beza, Tractationes Theologiae (1570-1582), Vol. 3, pp.248 and 256.

(38) For a defence of Beza, see I. McPhee, Conservator or Transformer of Calvin's Theology? A Study of the Origins and Development of Theodore Beza's Thought, (1550-1570), (Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 1979).

(39) See Basil Hall, Calvin against the Calvinists in John Calvin, ed. G. E. Duffield (1966), p.28 and Peter Toon, The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity 1689-1765, pp.15-16.

(40) Institutes, III:11:23 and III:14:11; Comment, I Corinthians 1:30.

involves pardon and acceptance, that Christ's active righteousness must be imputed to secure the latter. Since man lost the divine favour through sin, favour is restored as and when that sin is pardoned. Calvin never intended a notion of imputation such as Beza, Owen and later Reformed theologians have envisaged. He did teach that Christ 'purchased a righteousness....by the whole course of his obedience' stressing that the righteousness which is relevant to man's salvation is ascribed in scripture 'peculiarly and specially to the death of Christ'. The active obedience of Christ is more immediately relevant to himself than to the sinner. It demonstrated his own 'competence' to be the sin-bearing mediator, in Calvin's view. 'The sacrifice would have been unavailing to justification if not offered' by his life-long and spontaneous obedience (41). For Calvin, then, 'imputed righteousness' simply meant pardon. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Hodge, Cunningham and Packer read more into Calvin than they are entitled to. They fail to expound him in context (42).

## 2. The Completeness of Justification.

A further question of importance concerns the completeness of justification. It has been assumed in the Reformed tradition that a believer's justification is complete and unrepeatable. 'The pardon granted in justification,' writes Berkhof, 'applies to all sins, past,

(41) Institutes, II:16:5.

(42) Even the Westminster Confession is not as explicit here as the Savoy Declaration. For the differences, see The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, ed. A. G. Matthews (1959), p.90. Charles Hodge admits that 'The earlier symbols of the Reformation do not make (the) distinction' between the active and passive obedience of Christ. Op. cit., Vol. 3, p.149. Hodge also doubts whether the Scriptures make the distinction (p.161) and Cunningham attributes Calvin's apparent refusal to speculate on the matter to the 'cautious and reverential spirit in which he usually conducted his investigations into divine things.' (Op. cit., p.404.)

present and future, and thus involves the removal of all guilt and of every penalty. This follows from the fact that justification does not admit of repetition....'(43) John Owen was certainly of this mind (44). It has been imagined that to think otherwise is to revert to the Roman view of justification, viz, since justification is an infusion of grace, and gracious habits are never perfect, therefore justification can never be complete in this life.

Although Berkhof believes that the Reformed view is 'eminently Scriptural', he candidly admits that it 'is not devoid of difficulty.' (45) The chief difficulty arises from the fact that 'justified believers' continue to sin, and Christians still require daily forgiveness. 'Consequently,' says Berkhof, 'it is not surprising that some felt constrained to speak of a repeated justification.'(46) As far as Wesley is concerned, he never confused justification with sanctification, yet he did deny that justification is completed at conversion (47). John Owen, while refuting the Roman doctrine of a two-fold justification sarcastically suggests the notion of 'twenty justifications as well as two' (48), whereas Wesley, in a late statement, considered it dangerous to speak of being in a 'justified state'. He concludes that 'We are every moment pleasing or displeasing to God....' (49)

(43) Op. cit., p.514.

(44) Op. cit., pp.140,142 and 144.

(45) Op. cit., p.514.

(46) Ibid, p.514.

(47) Works, Vol. 10, p.308.

(48) Op. cit., p.138.

(49) Works, Vol. 8, p.325. Wesley warns against ~~against~~ spiritual complacency. 'And think not to say,"I was justified once; my sins were once forgiven me:"....' The First Fruits of the Spirit, Works, Vol.5, p. 88.

It does not seem that the Anglican Reformers addressed themselves to this particular question, although there are hints that the idea of a repeated justification would not be thought inconsistent. This arises from the strict equivalence between 'justification' and 'pardon'. The Homilies encourage those who 'fall into great sins' after 'we be once come unto God' to repent 'with a full purpose of amendment of life' and to 'flee unto the mercy of God.... through faith in his son Jesus Christ' for 'pardon and remission of the same, and that we shall be received again into the favour of our heavenly Father.' (50) Such language is perfectly consistent with the idea of a repeated justification. Being 'received again into the favour' of God amounts to being justified again. The same may be said of Luther. 'Sometimes it happeneth that the saints also do fall and perform the desires of the flesh: as David fell horribly into adultery....To those therefore which sin and fall through infirmity, pardon is not denied, so they rise again and continue not in their sin.' (51) If pardon is the same thing as justification, then the idea of David's justification being repeated cannot be invalid.

Even if the strength of this argument is largely inferential thus far, Berkhof seems to be unaware that John Calvin should be included among those who spoke of a 'repeated and even daily justification' (52). Calvin thought it perfectly in order to see justification

(50) An Homily of Repentance and true Reconciliation unto God, op. cit., p.491, (emphasis mine).

(51) Comment, Galatians 5:17, op. cit., p.505 (emphasis mine).

(52) Op. cit., p.515.

as a progressive experience (53). Although he is arguing against the idea of justification initiated by faith yet completed by works, he is not slow to insist that justification, i.e. pardon, is repeatable. After pointing out God's promises to believers, and not just to 'the wicked and profane, whom the Lord justifies', Calvin says, 'Paul....quotes the words of David, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' (Psalm 32:1) It is certain that David is not speaking of the ungodly, but of believers such as he himself was....Therefore we must have this blessedness not once only, but must hold it fast during our whole lives.' (54) This is no isolated utterance in Calvin. 'Christ did not suffer just to expiate our sins once, nor was the gospel instituted only in order that the sins we committed before baptism should be forgiven us but rather, since we sin every day, so by a daily forgiveness God receives us into His favour.' (55) Remembering Calvin's synonymous use of 'justification' and 'pardon', and that both necessarily imply the bestowal of divine favour, it is perfectly in order to suppose that Calvin believed in a repeated justification. This thought is even more pronounced elsewhere. With more than a mere hint of Wesley's statement 'We are every moment pleasing or displeasing to God....' Calvin says on I John 1:7, 'The passage teaches us....that the free pardon of sins is not given to us only

(53) Institutes, III:14:(title). T. H. L. Parker fails to discuss this in Calvin's Doctrine of Justification, EQ, April, 1952, pp.101-107.

(54) Ibid, III:14:11. Calvin's understanding of the strict equivalence between 'justification' and 'remission of sins' in Romans 4:6-8 (see note 29) demands the interpretation being advanced here.

(55) Comment, II Corinthians 5:20.

once, but that this benefit dwells forever in the Church and is daily offered to believers....Meanwhile, we continually separate ourselves, so far as we can, from God's grace by new sins. Hence all the saints need daily forgiveness of sins, and this alone keeps us in God's family.' (56) It is difficult to imagine Calvin employing stronger language to refute the concept of an initial and completed justification. His statements, while predictably different from the Roman Catholic view of justification, certainly distance him from the theology of later Calvinism on this subject.

Buchanan is arguably involved in a contradiction when he insists on one hand that justification 'is completed at once' and, on the other, that it is 'continued with the renewed exercise of forgiving mercy.' (57) The completion of justification can only be maintained if it is regarded as something quite distinct from pardon. (58) Once it is admitted that pardon is an element in justification, and that pardon is a repeated occurrence, then justification cannot be understood as completed at its commencement. It is obvious that Calvin's conception is not beset by the kind of logical dilemmas which face Owen, Buchanan and others.

The obvious objection to the idea of repeated justification is that it undermines the believer's assurance. Calvin clearly saw no inconsistency between incomplete justification and assurance. In

(56) Comment, I John 1:7.

(57) Op. cit., p.265.

(58) John Gill clearly separates them. 'Pardon of sin, and justification from it, are very closely connected; the one follows upon the other.' A Body of Divinity (1770), (1971 ed.), p.501.

his definition of faith, he says that 'it is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour' (59) and yet 'since we sin every day, so by daily forgiveness God receives us into His favour.' (60) In other words, without daily repentance and faith, it were presumptuous to be assured of God's favour on the basis of some initial, past justification. Like Wesley (61), Calvin therefore links assurance with 'present pardon'. However, like Owen (62), Calvin also links assurance with election. Even then, 'a taste of this doctrine' (63) is only obtained indirectly. '....if we are in communion with Christ, we have proof sufficiently clear and strong that we are written in the Book of Life.' (64) Since being 'in communion with Christ' depends upon 'daily forgiveness' and 'sanctification' (65), assurance of both present pardon and election have the same derivation for those who are 'in Christ'. Calvin's teaching of progressive justification only raises problems of assurance for the 'slothful'. 'One argument whereby we may prove that we are truly elected by God and not called in vain is that our profession of faith should find its response in a good conscience and an upright life.' (66)

(59) Institutes, III:2:7.

(60) Comment, II Corinthians 5:20.

(61) Journal for October 6th, 1738. Works, Vol. 1, p.151.

(62) A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit, Works, Vol. 3, p.601.

(63) Institutes, III:21:1.

(64) Ibid, III:24:5.

(65) Ibid, III:2:8.

(66) Comment, II Peter 1:10. It is generally agreed that Calvin and the other Reformers tended to confuse faith and assurance. See Homilies, p.34, '....a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises....' Therefore a 'doubting Christian' was a contradiction in terms. For a criticism of this position, see Cunningham, The Reformers and the Doctrine of Assurance in op. cit., pp.111f. R. T. Kendall defends Calvin's position here, op. cit., pp.18-19, 208. Paul Helm points out that Calvin did



### 3. The Righteousness of Faith.

As has been demonstrated, Calvin never seems to have thought in terms of an imputation of Christ's active righteousness in the justification of sinners. Wesley however accepted a carefully defined version of the concept, yet showing most sympathy with Calvin's own definition (67). For Wesley then, Christ's active as well as passive obedience was the meritorious cause of the sinner's pardon or justification (68). He rejected the currently understood Calvinistic idea of imputation since this undermined, in his view, the necessity of imparted righteousness as a subjective condition of final salvation. His chief objection to the phrase 'Christ's righteousness imputed' was that it is nowhere used in the New Testament (69). It was also liable to abuse. He frequently employed the oft quoted scriptural statement that 'faith is counted for righteousness' (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3,5; Galatians 3:6) and the parallel one that 'Faith is imputed for righteousness', (Romans 4:6,22f; James 2:23). Seventeenth century scholastic Calvinism became suspicious of this scriptural phraseology since some had implied that faith was a meritorious act, thus detracting from the 'righteousness of Christ imputed'. For this reason, Owen thought it a mistake to say that 'faith itself....is imputed unto us for righteousness.' (70)

(66) continued/ allow the possibility that 'certainty' might be 'tinged with doubt' although it 'ought to be certain and assured'. Op. cit., pp.23f. Both Owen and Wesley were careful to distinguish between faith and assurance.

(67) The Lord our Righteousness, Works, Vol. 5, p.226.

(68) Ibid, p.226.

(69) Works, Vol. 10, p.306. See E. A. Litton, Introduction to Dogmatic Theology (1960 ed.), p.278. Buchanan describes the position subscribed to by Wesley as a 'partial imputation' of Christ's merits. 'But Christ is not divided; nor his righteousness capable of being separated into parts.' Op. cit.,

continued/

Again, Wesley follows several precedents in Reformation theology. William Tyndale says that salvation is 'imputed....unto faith only' (71) and that 'Righteousness is even such faith.'(72) Luther does not hesitate to say that 'the righteousness of faith ....God through Christ, without works, imputeth unto us.' (73) Article IV of the Augsburg Confession concludes with 'This faith God imputes to us as righteousness.' (74)

Returning to Calvin, his approval of the very scriptural expression objected to by Owen is undisguised. 'Now, since men have not righteousness laid up in them, they obtain it by imputation, in that God accepts their faith in lieu of righteousness.'(75) 'Abraham....had obtained righteousness by faith....Hence his faith was truly in place of righteousness for him.'(76) Though more moderate than Owen and the Savoy Declaration, even the Westminster Confession is at variance with Calvin. God 'justifieth....not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them....' (77) Owen would wish to be more specific and say that God accepts Christ's active as well as passive righteousness 'in lieu' of the believer's

(69) continued/ p.347. However, denying the Bezan theory of imputation does not commit Wesley, or Calvin for that matter, to denying the meritorious significance of Christ's total obedience. Wesley simply denies that the statement 'Christ's active righteousness is imputed to us' means 'Christ kept the law in our stead.' To say otherwise is to countenance antinomianism.

(70) Op. cit., p.271.

(71) Op. cit., p.15.

(72) Ibid, p.494.

(73) Op. cit., p.22.

(74) Op. cit., p.522.

(75) Comment, Galatians 3:6.

(76) Ibid.

righteousness. For Calvin, this would be an unwarrantable idea. Of course, it goes without saying that the Reformers denied that faith possessed any intrinsic merit of its own. Faith is imputed for righteousness because it rests in the merits of Christ alone. The fact remains that faith, as the believer's subjective response to the gospel, is reckoned as his righteousness because, through it, he receives pardon or justification. This pardon is his righteousness. With the understanding that Christ's merits are the sole object of faith, there can be no validity in Owen's rejection of the scriptural phrases in question. In this respect as well as others, Wesley's view of the issues appears closer to Calvin's than Owen's does.

#### 4. Obedience and Salvation.

Although John Owen was just as concerned as John Wesley to stress the necessity of holiness and obedience in the Christian life, he had difficulty in convincing his critics (78). His theory of imputation invited the question that if Christ's active righteousness is imputed to the believer, then what need is there for inherent righteousness? If justification depends upon Christ's personal obedience, then it becomes an indifferent matter whether the believer is inherently holy or not. On the other hand, Wesley had no such problems. His denial of Owen's theory of imputation implied the

(77) Op. cit., Ch. XI:I.

(78) See Owen's answer to the criticisms of his position by William Sherlock in Works, Vol. 2, pp.314f.

necessity of imparted righteousness as a condition, not of initial justification, but of final justification and salvation. He was careful to deny that the Christian's obedience could merit salvation, but it was necessary for salvation nonetheless. In his view, justification and sanctification were not to be separated too rigidly. What then was the verdict of the Reformers?

Thomas Cranmer spoke for all the Reformers when he said that justifying faith was never an isolated thing. 'Faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined in every man that is justified, but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying.' (79) This idea is amplified in the Homily on Faith, where we are told that 'the very sure and lively Christian faith' is necessarily accompanied by repentance and 'a steadfast determination with ourselves, through (God's) grace, to obey and serve Him in keeping His commandments, and never to turn back again to sin.' (80) The Homily on Good Works makes plain that none but a working faith will guarantee salvation. 'So that this is to be taken for a most true lesson taught by Christ's own mouth, that the works of the moral commandments of God be the very true works of faith, which lead to the blessed life to come.' (81)

Cranmer seems to be arguing that Christ's death is the sole meritorious cause of salvation, but that obedience is absolutely

(79) Homilies, op. cit., p.27.

(80) Ibid, pp.40-41.

(81) Ibid, p.53.

necessary as a condition of final salvation. He could never be charged with antinomianism, and there is no theory of imputation to seemingly invalidate the need for inherent righteousness. If the idea of conditional salvation is no more than a strong hint in Cranmer, William Tyndale is most explicit in stressing conditionality. 'For God promiseth them only forgiveness of sins, which turn to keep his laws.' (82) Hugh Latimer draws attention to the petition in the Lord's Prayer, where the sinner's pardon at God's hands is conditional upon his willingness to forgive others. Although Christ's sufferings are the sole meritorious cause of salvation, there is a further conditional element. '....if thou canst find in thy heart to forgive all thy enemies whatsoever they have done against thee, then thou mayest be sure that thou art one of the flock of God.' (83)

John Hooper emphatically warned against an antinomian conception of justification. Those who 'dream of faith that justifieth, the which neither repentance precedeth, neither honesty of life followeth' incur 'their double damnation if they amend not.' Hooper then asks how antinomianism can be consistent with 'the doctrine of Christ, which only teacheth....all verity and virtuous life.' (84) Although justification depends upon the merits of Christ 'received solely by faith', Hooper still insists that 'contrition' must be

(82) Op. cit., p.525.

(83) Ibid, p.421.

(84) Early Writings, p.53.

present and that 'necessarily charity and a virtuous life must follow.' (85) He thought that those who neglected godliness of life 'slandered' the gospel of gratuitous justification. He even grants that stressing personal obedience makes 'this part of the gospel not so pleasant as the other.' (86) However, Hooper preserves what he believes is the balance of the New Testament. Here is neither legalism nor antinomianism. 'For a conclusion, justification is a free remission of sin, and acceptation into the favour of God, for Christ's merits, the which remission of sin must follow necessarily amendment of life, or else we receive the grace of God in vain.' (87) Hooper's polemic against antinomianism is remarkable for a Reformation theologian. He continually stresses the conditional nature of salvation. 'The law is also necessary for the justified man, to teach him with what works he should exercise his faith....Therefore this is true, that the ordinance of God still remaineth in the justified man immutable, that he must obey the law....The Scripture is more diligent and more ample in teaching the Christian, justified man the obedience unto God and virtuous life, than it is to show us our salvation in Christ; and that is for this purpose only, that we should not by our licentious liberty receive the grace of God in vain....Therefore our only remedy is to pray for grace and amend.' (88) In short, 'I believe,'

(85) Ibid, p.50.

(86) Ibid, p.59.

(87) Ibid, p.59.

(88) Ibid, p.95.

declares Hooper, 'that good works are....necessary for salvation.'(89)

Notwithstanding their convictions about salvation by grace, Luther would doubtless consider the English Reformer's conception of the gospel somewhat legalistic. However, although Luther never seems to speak of good works as conditions of salvation, he still stressed their importance. His chief arguments for good works appears similar to John Owen's, viz, good works are necessary, simply because God has commanded them. Certainly this is the position of Articles VI and XX of the Augsburg Confession. (90)

When John Wesley rejected Luther's Galatians in 1741 as a 'dangerous treatise', he believed Luther's views on sanctification were defective. However, as P. S. Watson says, 'There is evidence that Wesley had read his Luther very cursorily, and that he was prejudiced from the start by the trouble he was having at the time with the antinomian and quietistic teaching of the Moravians.' (91) Watson is careful to point out Luther's own strength of feeling against antinomianism elsewhere (92) without considering the passages in Galatians which led to Wesley's censure. The most likely example was the one which was instrumental in Charles Wesley's conversion in 1738, where Luther explains how a sinner is justified. 'Why do we then nothing? Do we work nothing for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer: Nothing at all. For the nature of

(89) Later Writings, p.59.

(90) Op. cit., pp.523 and 528f.

(91) Op. cit., p.14.

(92) 'What Christ has merited for us is not only gratia, 'grace', but also donum, the 'gift' of the Holy Ghost, so that we might not only have forgiveness of sin, but also cease from sinning. Whoever, then, does not cease from sinning, but continues in his former wicked life, must have another Christ from the antinomians.' Op. cit., p.14.

this righteousness is, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing whatsoever of the law or of works, but to know and to believe this only, that Christ....is....made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption....' (93)

Luther's answer is rather different from the kind of view found in the English Reformers. From the evidence already outlined, they would argue that to be justified, a sinner must earnestly and sincerely repent of his sins, trusting in the merits of Christ alone, and seeking by God's grace to keep the commandments. They would urge at the same time that repentance, faith and obedience were not meritorious in themselves, yet nonetheless essential conditions of justification and salvation. They would say that nothing can be done of a meritorious nature, but that is not the same thing as saying, as Luther appears to be saying, that 'nothing' is to be done. Luther's statement lacks this kind of clarity, which Wesley was already familiar with in the writings of the English Reformers. (94) However, there is some truth in saying that Wesley had not sufficiently read Luther. Had he persevered, he would have been reassured by Luther's comment on Galatians 5:6, '....faith which worketh by love....', described by Outler as 'one of Wesley's favorite texts' (95). For Luther the believer who does 'nothing' - by which, to be consistent, he must mean meritoriously - must believe with an active, obedient faith. 'He that

(93) Ibid, p.25.

(94) See Wesley's abridgement, The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith and Good Works, Extracted from the Homilies of the Church of England (1738).

(95) Op. cit., p.221.



will be a true Christian indeed....must be a true believer. Now he believeth not truly, if works of charity follow not his faith ....Christ....shutteth out (of his kingdom) all slothful and idle persons which say: If faith justify without works, then let us work nothing, but let us only believe and do what we list. Not so, ye enemies of grace, saith Paul. It is true that only faith justifieth, but I speak here of faith, which, after it hath justified, is not idle, but occupied and exercised in working through love.' (96)

Luther's comment is almost identical to Wesley's view of faith. It was unfortunate that Luther had expressed himself so confusingly in his Introduction. The comment on Galatians 5:6 is much more satisfactory. As such, Luther appears to argue that good works are a condition of final salvation, if, without them, no admittance is possible into 'Christ's kingdom'.

What then of Calvin? In common with the Augustinian theology of the Reformation era, Calvin constantly stressed that the source of salvation was to be traced to predestination and God's 'free election' (97). The work of Christ was the sole meritorious cause of all the blessings of the gospel. However, this did not inhibit Calvin from noting the conditional elements within the salvation process. Even though the divine purpose guarantees the fulfilment of such conditions. Calvin does not allow his convictions about the sovereignty

(96) Op. cit., p.466. See also Luther's description of faith in his famous introduction to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. 'Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith; and so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly....He who does not these works is a faithless man....' (Op. cit., ab. J. Theodore Mueller, (1960), p.xv.)

(97) See Institutes, III:21; Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God, tr. J. K. S. Reid (1961), and Sermons on Ephesians (1973 ed.), pp.22f.

of God to weaken the conditional character of the divine promises and exhortations.

R. T. Kendall is incorrect to say that 'Faith for Calvin was never a 'condition' (98). Distinguishing between God's secret and revealed wills, Calvin understands I Timothy 2:4 and Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11, to be teaching God's willingness to save all men. 'But the mutual relation between threats and promises shows such forms of speech to be conditional....They do not simply and positively declare what God has decreed in his secret counsel but what he is prepared to do for all who are brought to faith and repentance.' (99) No one can read this passage and doubt that repentance and faith are 'conditions' of salvation in Calvin's thinking, albeit not meritorious ones, a distinction Kendall fails to make.

There are other statements in Calvin of a similar kind. Even if the word 'condition' is not used, the whole tone and drift of his discussion assumes 'conditionality', with special reference to the believer's obedience. With all the emphases of grace fully understood, Calvin can still say that the 'good works of believers are causes why the Lord does them good....There is nothing to prevent the Lord from embracing works as inferior causes' of salvation. 'Those whom in mercy he has destined for the inheritance of eternal life, he, in his ordinary administration, introduces to the possession of it by means

(98) Op. cit., p.210.

(99) Eternal Predestination, pp.105-106 (emphases mine). Reid points out Beza's alteration of Calvin's 'But....' (with which the quotation starts) to 'If....' This change is probably due to theological reasons. Beza effectively cast doubt on Calvin's otherwise clear intentions. Calvin says elsewhere that 'Repentance and faith must needs go together....in showing that God receiveth us to mercy...it beholdeth us to add, how it is upon condition that we return unto God, as was spoken of heretofore by the prophets.' Sermons on the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, (1579), (1983 facsimile), pp.1181-1182.

of good works.' (100) Since believers can only infer their election from their willingness -other things being equal - to perform good works, the conditional nature of God's promises is given due weight. The process of salvation involves a sequence of causes and effects - a 'chain reaction' of grace. 'For this reason,' Calvin concludes, the Lord 'sometimes makes eternal life a consequent of works' even though the 'true cause' (by which Calvin must mean the ultimate, meritorious cause) is 'the mercy of God'. (101)

Calvin's exposition of the conditional passage, 'But if we walk in the light, ....the blood of....Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' (I John 1:7) shows a similar understanding. 'This is a remarkable passage,' admits Calvin. 'From it we learn, first, that the expiation of Christ, effected by his death, belongs properly to us when we cultivate righteousness....For Christ is Redeemer only to those who are turned from iniquity and begin a new life.' (102) Although Calvin believes that divine grace is the ultimate cause of salvation, he does not allow the conditionality of salvation from the human perspective to be diluted by the fact of the divine perspective. 'Daily forgiveness' and 'cultivated righteousness' are both seen as conditions of being 'kept in God's family'. (103)

Elsewhere, Calvin argues that 'the godly' are 'free from the power of death, and from every curse, provided they live not in the

(100) Institutes, II:14:21.

(101) Ibid.

(102) Comment, I John 1:7 (emphasis mine).

(103) Ibid.

flesh but in the spirit....They know that while they abide in Christ, they are beyond every danger of condemnation.' (104) Furthermore, while none 'of the elect is in fact ever cut off' hypocrisy can deceive many. Commenting on Christ's words 'If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch', Calvin writes, 'He again draws their attention to the punishment of ingratitude and so arouses and stimulates them to perseverance. This last is indeed a gift of God, but the exhortation to fear is not unnecessary, for our rioting flesh can uproot us.' (105) It is all the more remarkable to find Calvin, like John Hooper, stressing the conditional nature of gospel exhortations in language more appropriate to John Wesley. 'Being messengers of God to men, their (i.e. ministers of the gospel) first duty is to offer the grace of God, but their second is to strive with all their might to ensure that it is not offered in vain.' (106)

It is obvious that Calvin's view of imputation could never lead to antinomianism. At the point where Owen speaks of the imputation of Christ's active righteousness, Calvin seems to speak of the necessity of sanctification, or inherent righteousness. In Calvin's view, imparted righteousness (sanctification) is as necessary a factor in salvation as imputed righteousness (pardon or justification). In this respect, his view is virtually identical to Wesley's

(104) Comment, Romans 8:1 (emphasis mine).

(105) Comment, John 15:6 (emphasis mine).

(106) Comment, II Corinthians 6:1.

statement that 'The righteousness of Christ is doubtless necessary for any soul that enters into glory: but so is personal holiness, too, for every child of man.' (107) Calvin refuses to separate justification and sanctification as later Reformed theology tended to do. (108) 'Christ cannot be divided into parts, so the two things, justification and sanctification, which we perceive to be united together in him, are inseparable.' (109) 'Christ, therefore, justifies no man without also sanctifying him....you cannot possess him without being made a partaker of his sanctification: for Christ cannot be divided.' (110) 'For these two things are always joined: the faith which apprehends the free love of Christ; and a good conscience and newness of life.' (111) It is clear from the evidence, that Calvin sees both justification and sanctification as constant correlates. He does not seem to follow the later schematization, where in the ordo salutis, justification is said to be the initial act and sanctification the subsequent process. (112) Such a conception appears different from Owen's, yet surprisingly close to Wesley's.

##### 5. The sola fide principle.

The doctrine of justification by faith alone has always been seen as a fundamental Protestant principle. Together with Sola Scriptura, solo Christo and sola gratia, sola fide expresses the

(107) The Wedding Garment, Works, Vol. 7, p.300.

(108) See Brian G. Armstrong, Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy (1969), pp.236f and 268. Unlike the standard Systematic Theologies by Hodge, Berkhof, Strong, Litton, etc., there is no separate treatment of the doctrine of sanctification in Calvin's Institutes.

(109) Institutes, III:11:6.

(110) Ibid, III:16:1.

(111) Comment, John 15:10.

(112) See J. A. T. Robinson, Wrestling with Romans (1979), pp.49-50.

essence of the gospel. Roman Catholic theology has never denied justification by faith; what it has denied is that the sinner is justified by faith alone. The Protestant view was meant to oppose the Roman view of justification by faith plus works. Rome responded by charging the Reformers with advocating a gospel of moral licence. This became a sensitive matter, since the sola fide principle was liable to abuse. John Owen strenuously argued for the principle, as commonly understood, whereas John Wesley became somewhat ambivalent about it. How then did the Reformers view sola fide?

It must be said that 'faith alone' is a phrase nowhere used in the New Testament, except in James 2:24 where the idea is rejected. Calvin partially concedes this (113), although he defends its use. It is arguable to suggest that, in using the 'faith alone' phrase, some of the Reformers involved themselves in conceptual difficulties. Calvin says that 'faith and works are necessarily connected' but he places 'justification in faith, not in works.' (114) Calvin explicitly argues that true faith is never naked, yet 'naked faith' alone justifies. Luther concurs here. He described it as a 'wicked gloss of the schoolmen' the view 'that faith then justifieth, when charity and good works are joined withal.' (115) However, Calvin seems to say something different when he says 'Christ cannot

(113) Institutes, III:11:19. See also Comment, Romans 3:28.

(114) Ibid, III:16:1.

(115) Galatians, op. cit., p.141.

be known without the sanctification of His Spirit: therefore faith cannot possibly <sup>be</sup> disjoined from pious affection.' (116) There is clearly a discrepancy here. If, in Calvin's sense, faith is never alone, how is it intelligible to assert justification by faith alone, as he and Luther did? Even Luther insists that, after justification, faith is active - 'faith working by love', so he is also confronted by the same conceptual difficulty. It is evident that the two Reformers are slightly at variance.

The Anglican Reformers appear to understand sola fide rather differently. Article XI declares that 'We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ....Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome doctrine....' Cranmer elaborates the meaning of 'faith only' when he says, 'But this saying, that we be justified by faith only, freely and without works, is spoken to take away clearly all merit of works....' (117) It is clear therefore, that 'sola fide' is not a statement about the psychological constituents of the believer's experience, but a statement about the objective ground of acceptance - the merits of Christ. 'Faith alone' is therefore a synecdochal expression meaning 'faith in Christ's merits alone'. It would appear that Luther, and to a certain extent Calvin, tended to confuse the psychological with the synecdochal understanding of

(116) Institutes, III:2:8.

(117) Homilies, p.30. Tyndale makes the same point. 'Finally, that we say, faith only justifieth, ought to offend no man. For if this be true, that Christ only redeemed, Christ only bore our sins....then must it needs be true that the trust only in Christ's deserving....doth alone quiet the conscience, and certify it that the sins are forgiven.' Prologue upon the Epistle to the Romans, op. cit., p.509. Hooper is of the same mind. 'Though sole faith exclude not other virtues to be present at the conversion of every sinner, yet doth sole faith, and only, exclude the merits of other virtues, and obtaineth solely remission of sin for Christ's sake....' A Declaration of Christ and His Office, Early Writings, op. cit., p.56.

the concept. It is doubtful whether the former has any scriptural warrant, and that only in the latter sense can the idea be defended. In short then, 'faith alone' should mean 'faith in Christ alone'. Viewed psychologically, even 'faith' does not justify. To say otherwise, says Cranmer, 'were to count ourselves to be justified by some act or virtue that is within ourselves.' (118) Calvin is equally careful to say 'Faith, therefore, does not justify by its own intrinsic virtue....properly speaking, God alone justifies.'(119)

The synecdochal view of sola fide solves a number of problems when strictly adhered to. It at once makes unnecessary the debate as to whether faith or love or any other spiritual graces justify. The answer is that none of them do - not even faith. The theological conundrum, 'How does faith alone justify when faith itself is never alone?' becomes a non-starter. Faith can never be defined in terms of a single psychological constituent, and it is doubtful that it is so defined in the New Testament. In their discussions about the nature of faith, it is arguable that the Reformers were aware of this. In demonstrating that faith was more than mere intellectual assent, Calvin argued that faith 'is more a matter of the heart than the head, of the affection than the intellect. For this reason, it is termed 'the obedience of faith' (Romans 1:5).' (120) During the seventeenth century, George Bull (1634-1710) was thought to

(118) Op. cit., p.31.

(119) Institutes, III:11:7.

(120) Ibid, III:2:8.



overthrow the Reformation doctrine of justification in his Harmonia Apostolica (1668), since he argued that 'faith comprehends all the obedience required by the gospel.' (121) Such a view has an interesting precedent in Miles Coverdale who affirmed 'The righteousness of faith comprehendeth the fear of God, love of thy neighbour, patience and all virtue.' (122) Indeed, all the Reformers were anxious to insist that faith was never 'naked', although the ambiguous use of 'sola fide' tended to detract from this. The chief thrust of Reformation theology in the controversy with Rome was not that man must do nothing, but that he can do nothing of meritorious value in the sight of God. Sola fide should therefore mean no more than 'faith in Christ only'. The issue then centres on the theology of merit, not the psychology of faith. It was at this point that the theologies of Rome and the Reformation parted company. In this respect, even George Bull did not betray the Reformation.

It will be interesting to compare the views of John Owen and John Wesley in the light of this Reformation background. The issues raised by the five questions considered in this introduction will have an important bearing on the analysis of the theologies of Owen and Wesley. For instance, what conception of sola fide did Owen employ? And which version did Wesley reject in 1741? It would appear that Owen was incorrect to assume a coincidence between his

(121) Op. cit., English tr. (1842), p.64. See W. H. Hutton, A History of the English Church (1903), pp.299-300.

(122) Treatise on Death, Remains (Parker Society), (1846), p.93.

sentiments and those of the Reformers (123), and that, in view of the evidence, Wesley's position requires a total re-evaluation. The evidence also tends to confirm the view that, in several respects, the Arminians, rather than the scholastic Calvinists, were the real heirs of Calvin. Arminius defended the way that he had expressed himself on the subject of justification as follows: 'Whatever interpretation may be put upon these expressions, none of our divines blames Calvin, or considers him to be heterodox on this point; yet my opinion is not so widely different from his as to prevent me from employing the signature of my own hand in subscribing to those things which he has delivered on this subject, in the Third Book of his Institutes; this I am prepared to do at any time, and to give them my full approval'(124).

Having outlined the Reformation background to the doctrine of justification, it is now possible to place the differing interpretations of the issues represented by Owen and Wesley in context, and to evaluate them accordingly.

(123) Charles Hodge incorrectly accepts Owen's claim at face value. (See the statement at the beginning of this chapter.) Op. cit., Vol. 3, p.147.

(124) A Declaration of the Sentiments of Arminius (delivered before the States of Holland in 1608), in The Works of James Arminius, ed. James Nichols (1825), Vol. 1, p.636. See E. Stuart Clarke, Arminius' Understanding of Calvin, EQ, January, 1982, pp.25-35. See also Hodge's discussion of the Wesleyan theologian Richard Watson, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp.190f, and James Nichols, Calvinism and Arminianism (1824), pp.xxviii-xxix.

2: The Righteousness of Faith

Whatever theological preconceptions influence their approach to the doctrine of justification, John Owen and John Wesley share a common antipathy towards the idea of salvation by works. Owen is clearly in the tradition of Luther, Augustine and the Apostle Paul when he writes:

The grace of God, the promise of mercy, the free pardon of sin, the blood of Christ, his obedience, and the righteousness of God in Him, rested in and received by faith, are everywhere asserted as the causes and means of our justification, in opposition unto anything in ourselves....Wherever mention is made of the duties, obedience, and personal righteousness of the best of men, with respect unto their justification, they are all renounced by them, and they betake themselves unto sovereign grace and mercy alone. (1)

John Wesley also captures the spirit of the author of the Epistle to the Romans when he declares:

Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins? With his own works? No. Were they ever so many or holy, they are not his own but God's. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement....Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works to plead, his mouth is utterly stopped before God. If then sinful men find favour with God, it is 'grace upon grace' ....Herein 'God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died' to save us. 'By grace' then 'are ye saved through faith.' (2)

These quotations from Wesley's first published sermon and Owen's mature treatise compare favourably as statements of the Gospel. They reflect the obvious influences of the Protestant Reformation, and any

(1) JF, p.27.

(2) Salvation by Faith, Works, Vol. 5, pp.5-6.

differences are negligible. What they do not reveal are the very significant differences in the authors' overall conception of justification. Such will become manifest in the course of the investigation.

Central to Owen's exposition of the doctrine of justification is his theory of imputation. This proved to be a most sensitive issue, as Owen himself was aware. 'For there is nothing in the whole of justification which meets with a more fierce and various opposition, but the truth is great, and will prevail.' (3) Both Socinians and Roman Catholics had their own reasons for rejecting puritan evangelicalism, but they both considered Owen's position to be inimical to practical godliness. 'Free justification, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is cried out against, as inconsistent with a necessity of personal holiness and obedience.'(4)

The Socinians objected that to assert the necessity of personal obedience as well as the imputation of Christ's own obedience involved a contradiction, and the Roman theologians argued that the expression 'Christ's righteousness imputed' was unscriptural. Owen argued against the Socinians that the view he holds falls within the same category as the doctrines of the trinity and the incarnation, viz, although, being revealed truths, they were 'above reason', they are not contrary to it. (5) Owen thought the Roman criticism totally presumptuous, since

(3) JF, p.252.

(4) Ibid, p.53.

(5) Ibid, p.47.

the entire body of Roman theology was based on 'such terms, distinctions and expressions, as are so far from being in the Scripture' and that such would never have existed 'had they escaped Aristotle's mint, or that of the schools deriving from him.' (6) Owen is confident that a careful exegesis of Scripture answers these and kindred criticisms.

It is important to note that there were others, as equally opposed to Roman and Socinian theology as Owen was, who voiced similar objections to his position. Baxter and Tillotson are typical of this outlook, not to speak of Wesley at this point. They doubted whether Owen's theory of imputation could be placed in the same category as the trinity and the incarnation, in view of the lack of 'hard' textual evidence. On the question of Aristotelianism, it will be interesting to see if Owen himself is free of the charge he levels at others. It has already been demonstrated that in his theology of the atonement, Owen depends quite heavily on Aristotle in both method and content.

In discussing the formal cause of justification, Owen affirms that

The righteousness of Christ (in his obedience and suffering for us) imputed unto believers, as they are united unto him by his Spirit, is that righteousness whereon they are justified before God, on the account whereof their sins are pardoned, and a right is granted them unto the heavenly inheritance.' (7)

(6) Ibid, pp.55-56. In a strongly worded protest against aristotelianism, Owen lamented the fact that too many 'theological determinations....are not delivered in the words that the Spirit of God teacheth' but in terms deriving from Aristotle. A Vindication of the Animadversions on "Fiat Lux", Works, Vol.14, p.315. Owen was strangely unaware of the influence of aristotelianism on his own theologising.

(7) Ibid, p.208.

The sinner's justification is therefore based upon the passive and active obedience of Christ. Acceptance with God requires the twin benefits of pardon and right to eternal life, for which purpose, 'on consideration of the mediation of Christ' God 'makes an effectual grant and donation of a true, real, perfect righteousness, even that of Christ himself, unto all that believe.' (8) Since justification involves pardon plus the imputation of the active obedience of Christ to the believer, Owen argues that 'the bare pardon of sin will neither make, constitute, nor denominate any man righteous.' (9) 'Can it be supposed that all the great and glorious effects of present grace and future blessedness should follow necessarily on, and be the effect of, mere pardon of sin?' (10) It is therefore a 'mistake' to say 'that remission of sin and justification are the same.' (11)

Owen was totally convinced that his view coincided with 'the ancient doctrine of the Church of England.' (12) This has been shown to be highly questionable in chapter one. Indeed, the Reformers, both British and Continental, must be judged defective in their views if Owen's exposition of the subject is correct. More importantly, Owen believed that the Scriptures taught his theory of imputation, and he spares no labour in attempting to prove this. Much of his polemic is directed against the Socinian denials of the

(8) Ibid, p.173.

(9) Ibid, p.263.

(10) Ibid, p.267.

(11) Ibid, p.271.

(12) Ibid, p.164.

work of Christ and the Roman doctrine of human merit. In the course of refuting the more extreme statements of error, Owen expects to deal with 'many interlopers' who 'make bold to borrow from both as they see occasion.' (13) Although no names are mentioned, Baxter and Tillotson must be included here. In Owen's view, any theologian who questions the imputation of Christ's active righteousness must make some concessions to Roman and Socinian views. How then does Owen demonstrate his case?

Before he examines the scriptural data, Owen considers three objections to the view he wishes to advance. It is urged against the imputation of Christ's active righteousness to the believer that

1. It is impossible. Christ obeyed the law for himself. In this respect, his righteousness was his, and remains his.
2. It is useless. If believers are justified by Christ's death or passive obedience, any further imputation is superfluous.
3. It is pernicious. Antinomianism becomes inevitable. If Christ actively kept the law for believers, why then are they required to be inherently holy?

In reply to the first objection, Owen argues 'that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the whole law for us; he did not only undergo the penalty of it due unto our sins, but also yielded that perfect

(13) Ibid, p.165.

obedience which it did require.' (14) Owen 'positively' denies that Christ's obedience was necessary 'as a qualification of his person, that he might be meet to be a mediator for us....' (15), (although he contradicts this elsewhere). 'He was born to us, and given to us; lived for us, and died for us; - that 'by the obedience of one many might be made righteous.' (16) 'The Lord Christ, in his obedience, was not a private but a public person.' (17)

Against the second objection, Owen argues that the pardoned sinner is not 'esteemed to have done all that is required of him.' (18) It is not sufficient, in Owen's view, to be not unrighteous. It is necessary to be positively righteous, and not merely innocent. Christ therefore provided a positive righteousness, by his active obedience to the law, and such is imputed to the pardoned, innocent sinner, as the basis of his justification. Owen insists that the law has 'two parts or powers.' (19) The 'preceptive part' requires 'Do this, and live', and the penal part pronounces death to an offender. Christ therefore fulfilled the law in both respects. Although Christ's death delivers the sinner from the curse of the law, 'we are not thence esteemed just or righteous, which we cannot be without respect unto the fulfilling of the law, or the obedience by it required.' (20)

(14) Ibid, p.253.

(15) Ibid, pp.257-258. See his Treatise on Communion with God, Works, Vol. 2, p.158.

(16) Ibid, p.258.

(17) Ibid, p.260.

(18) Ibid, p.263.

(19) Ibid, p.264.

(20) Ibid, p.266.



Owen does not deal with the third objection at this stage of his treatise. The necessity of 'evangelical personal righteousness is considered elsewhere (21) and will be discussed in the next chapter. Before Owen's exegesis of the scriptural data is analysed, it is appropriate to examine Wesley's view of the issues.

Wesley considers that Christ's active obedience to the law is relevant to the believer's justification in a manner different from his passive obedience. He teaches that 'the righteousness of Christ, both his active and passive righteousness, is the meritorious cause of our justification.' (22) He was however reluctant to give the statements 'Christ lived for me' and 'Christ died for' the same status. 'Therefore, though I believe he hath lived and died for me, yet I would speak very tenderly and sparingly of the former, (and never separately from the latter) even as sparingly as do the Scriptures....' (23) Such statements as 'Christ has kept the law in our stead' and 'The obedience of one is Christ's actual performance of the whole law' he never countenanced for fear of antinomianism:

For if the very personal obedience of Christ (as those expressions directly lead me to think) be mine the moment I believe, can anything be added thereto? Does my obeying God add any value to the perfect obedience of Christ? On this scheme, then, are not the holy and unholy on the very same footing? (24)

Wesley's chief objection to the phrase 'the imputed righteousness

(21) Ibid, pp.152f.

(22) The Lord our Righteousness, Works, Vol. 5, p.226.

(23) PJ, p.318.

(24) Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ, Works, Vol. 10, p.303.

of Christ' was its unbiblical character. 'It is not scriptural; it is not necessary.' (25) He seems therefore to argue that Christ's active obedience has a causal, rather than a personal, significance; without it, Christ's sacrifice could not have merited pardon.

Wesley insists that if the phrase is to be used at all - and he does employ it occasionally (26), it should only refer to Christ's passive obedience. 'His 'becoming obedient unto death', that is, dying for man, is certainly the chief part, if not the whole, which is meant by that expression.' (27)

Wesley gives two important reasons for his position. He rejects Owen's argument that Christ had to fulfil both the preceptive and penal demands of the law for man's justification. He says that by his death alone, Christ has satisfied the law. Wesley observes that the law 'required only the alternative, obey or die. It required no man to obey and die too. If any man had perfectly obeyed, he would not have died.' (28) Secondly, Wesley argues that if Christ's perfect obedience is imputed to the believer, then the believer has no more need of pardon than Christ had. 'If his obedience be ours, we still perfectly obey in him.' (29)

In reply to Owen's argument that 'It is one thing to be acquitted before the throne of a king....another to be made his son by adoption....' Wesley says this might apply to a 'rebel against an

(25) PJ, pp.306,327.

(26) Ibid, p.326. See also The Lord our Righteousness, op. cit., p.226.

(27) Ibid, p.318.

(28) PJ, p.312.

(29) Ibid, p.313.

earthly king' but not to 'a rebel against God.' Pardon necessarily implies an acceptance. The two 'cannot be divided....In the very same moment that God forgives, we are the sons of God. Therefore this is an idle dispute.' (30) For this reason, Wesley teaches that 'The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins.' (31) 'Pardon' and 'justification' are therefore strictly synonymous.

It is interesting to see Wesley's frequent appeals to John Calvin in his treatment of justification (32). From the evidence cited in chapter one, there can be no doubt that Wesley's views have considerable support in Calvin's writings. Not least is this the case in regard to Christ's obedience. There is no suggestion in Calvin that 'Christ kept the law in our stead' as understood by John Owen. Although Calvin does not totally exclude Christ's obedience in his life (33), he usually equates his death with that obedience which is relevant to man's justification. 'Christ ever remains a Mediator to reconcile the Father to us, and there is a perpetual efficacy in his death, viz....perfect obedience, by which all our iniquities are covered.' (34) 'Christ by his obedience, truly purchased and merited grace for us....he appeased God by his obedience....' (35) 'Christ....was destined to appease the wrath of God by his sacrifice, and wipe away our transgressions by his

(30) Ibid, p.311.

(31) Justification by Faith, Works, Vol. 5, p.52. See also Appeal II, p.45. See George R. Bolster, op. cit.

(32) PJ, pp.304 and 326. See the sketch of Wesley, (section 3) in the introduction.

(33) See Institutes, II:xvi:5 and Sermons on Ephesians (1973), p.53.

(34) Institutes, III:xiv:11.

(35) Ibid, II:xvii:3.

obedience.' (36) As a result of Christ's passive obedience therefore, Calvin concludes that 'salvation was obtained for us by his righteousness....' (37) Such is the righteousness which, in Calvin's view, is imputed to believers as their righteousness. Just as he equates 'justification' with 'pardon', so by the phrase 'imputed righteousness', Calvin only meant 'forgiveness of sin'. Indeed, all these various expressions are strictly synonymous. Wesley follows Calvin closely here, for he constantly equates 'justification' with 'righteousness' where the sinner's acceptance with God is concerned. (38) In other words, he would view this statement of Owen's as meaningless: 'Wherefore, as we plead that the death of Christ is imputed unto us for our justification, so we deny that it is imputed unto us for our righteousness.' (39)

It was pointed out in chapter one that Arminius expressed total agreement with Calvin's views on justification. (40) Such evidence lends weight to the view that the Arminians were the true heirs of Calvin, at least where the doctrine of justification is concerned. (41) The Arminian Puritan John Goodwin argued the same point even before he forsook Calvinism and embraced Arminianism. John Wesley takes note of this fact in the Preface to his abridgement of Goodwin's Imputatio Fidei, or a Treatise of Justification (1642). (42)

(36) Ibid, II:xvii:1.

(37) Ibid, II:xvii:3.

(38) See Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ, op. cit., p.302 and Calvin, Institutes, III:xi:2; Comment, Romans 4:6.

(39) Op. cit., p.266.

(40) Arminius refused however to commit himself on the passive/active righteousness debate. See Works, Vol. 1, p.632.

(41) Even where the atonement is concerned, it cannot be denied that Arminianism preserves the universal aspect of Calvin's doctrine. This has been shown in Section I.

There is also a close affinity with Calvin's position in the writings of the German Reformed theologian Johannes Fischer (Piscator) (1546-1625), Professor in the University of Herborn in Nassau. (43) Owen pays some attention to Piscator's arguments (44), but it is doubtful whether he satisfactorily deals with them. Piscator argues that 'God forgives our sins solely on account of the obedience of the death of Christ.' Furthermore, 'there is equal validity and force' in the two phrases 'to forgive sins and to impute righteousness'. Piscator also argues that had Christ satisfied for sin by his active obedience to the law, it would be unjust of God to demand further satisfaction in his death. If both were demanded, then God would 'have the same debt twice paid'. Consequently, it is illogical for believers to have to keep the law, if Christ's obedience to the law is imputed to them. Piscator asserts that, by Christ's death, believers are delivered from the curse of the law, not from the law itself. Owen, paradoxically, concedes this point (45), although he then argues that Christ takes over the believer's obligation in this respect.

Piscator finally argues that if Christ has merited acceptance with God by his active obedience, 'the consequence will be, that the remission of sins was affected without the shedding of blood.... Therefore Christ has not merited for us the remission of sins, by the

(42) Wesley, op. cit., p.304. See also Arminius, Works, Vol. 1, pp.632-633.

(43) For Piscator, see The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (1957), Vol. 9, p.73. Also, The Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography, ed. MacKenzie (n.d.), Vol. 3, p.565. Wesley cites Piscator frequently as a predestinarian theologian in A Dialogue Between a Predestinarian and His Friend, Ibid, p.250f.

(44) Op. cit., pp.334f.

(45) Op. cit., pp.265-266.

obedience which he performed to the law.' (46) Piscator does not deny that Christ obeyed the law 'as a rule of duty', since he could not have made atonement for others had he himself not been holy. It has been noted that Calvin also suggests this thought. (47)

Buchanan (48) and Berkhof (49) criticise Piscator for suggesting that the believer's own personal obedience becomes the ground of 'future hope', if Christ's obedience is excluded as an element in his justification. This is a matter to be discussed later. Suffice it to say, that this very criticism is made by Owen against all who deny the imputation of Christ's active righteousness. This is why he considers it a 'mistake' to teach that 'faith itself, as our act and duty....is imputed unto us for righteousness.' (50) However, Wesley is adamant when he says:

But perhaps some will object, 'Nay, but you affirm that faith is imputed for righteousness.' St. Paul affirms this over and over; therefore I affirm it too. Faith is imputed for righteousness to every believer; namely, faith in the righteousness of Christ....' (51)

The fact remains that Owen takes issue with the very language of Scripture, at the same time introducing an arguably unscriptural theory of imputation into the discussion. Arminius is not slow to defend himself as Wesley did later. 'Our brethren do not reprehend ME, but the APOSTLE, who has employed this phrase so many times in one chapter, and who does not refrain from the use of the other

(46) See the lengthy extract from Piscator in Arminius, Works, ed. Nichols, Vol. 1, p.634; see Piscator's treatise Libri Duo de Justificatione Hominis Coram Deo (1618).

(47) 'And indeed, the first step in obedience was his voluntary subjection; for the sacrifice would have been unavailing to justification if not offered spontaneously.' Institutes, II:xvi:5.

(48) The Doctrine of Justification, p.189.

(49) Systematic Theology, p.525.

(50) Op. cit., p.271.

(51) The Lord our Righteousness, op. cit., p.226.

phrase, 'to be justified by faith and through faith'....' (52) It has already been seen that Calvin's exegesis is identical to that of Arminius (53). It almost seems as if the very phrases 'justification by faith' is an embarrassment to Owen, although he does admit, yet not without considerable qualification, that faith is a 'condition' of justification. (54)

It must be said that Owen says little <sup>to</sup> seriously challenge <sup>^</sup> the kind of argumentation latent in Calvin, made explicit by Piscator, and re-affirmed by the Arminians and John Wesley. However, he does raise an important point not covered in the discussion thus far. Whilst he does not deny in another treatise that Christ's active obedience fitted him to fulfil the role of mediator of the new Covenant, he argues that it had an additional purpose. In short, Christ had sufficient 'habitual righteousness' through the mere fact of being incarnate, to qualify him as mediator. Therefore Christ's subsequent 'obedience hath another use besides to fit him for an oblation, for which he was most fit without it.' (55)

In other words, had Christ been crucified as a child, his death would have been no less a fulfilment of the penal requirement of the law. Since he suffered in manhood, his active obedience was 'wrought out' for believers and not for himself. In the absence of any biblical evidence to support this speculation, it might be argued

(52) Op. cit., Vol. 2, p.45.

(53) See Comment, Galatians 4:6.

(54) Op. cit., p.73. See the detailed discussion of 'faith as a condition', pp.105-107.

(55) Of Communion with God, Works, Vol. 2, pp.159,161. Hereafter, Communion.

that Christ could not have fulfilled all his 'offices' without attaining manhood. He was appointed not only as 'priest', but also as 'prophet' and 'king' over the church, a view of Christ's work central to Reformed theology and affirmed by Owen himself. To discharge concurrently with that of 'priest', the offices of 'prophet' and 'king' - revealing his Father's will and instructing the disciples- Christ required human maturity. Furthermore, to be the second Adam required mature manhood to make the parallelism meaningful. Thus, the Apostle Paul wrote that there is 'one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' (I Timothy 2:5).

If Owen's argument is granted, that Christ has obeyed the law preceptively as well as penally, in the stead of the believer, then the statements 'Christ lived for me' and 'Christ died for me' possess the same soteriological status. Paul's statement that sinners are 'justified by his blood' (Romans 5:9) thus appears incomplete. Owen's view demands the revision 'being justified by his life and death'. The following anomaly arises from this suggestion. If Christ's obedience to the law has the same substitutionary function as his death, then the believer's obligation to keep the law has been suspended. How then can antinomianism be avoided, even theoretically? It can be said 'Christ was punished that I might not be punished' but it is hardly valid to assert 'Christ obeyed the law, that I might not



obey the law.' There is no contradiction in saying that Christ's passive obedience has cancelled the believer's obligation to punishment but not his obligation to obedience. But once Christ's active obedience is taken into account, in Owen's sense, it is impossible to avoid the charge of inconsistency. The question remains: if Christ has actively obeyed the law in our stead, why do we, in any sense, need to keep it as well? Apart from these and other ambiguities in Owen's position, his arguments must depend, in the final analysis, on the textual data. This must now receive attention.

Owen's theory of imputation assumes that every biblical reference to Christ's obedience refers to his active as well as his passive obedience. As a consequence, the righteousness which is imputed to the believer is more than 'mere pardon'. The believer is delivered from condemnation by pardon of sin, but a right to eternal life is only guaranteed by the imputation of Christ's active righteousness. Therefore the believer's righteousness before God has positive and negative elements, which correspond, in Owen's view, to the totality of Christ's obedience. The biblical references cited by Owen as evidence for his view are Galatians 4:4,5; Romans 5:18,19; Philippians 2:8 and Hebrews 5:8, in which Christ's obedience is either implied or explicitly stated.

1. Galatians 4:4,5. 'But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.'

Owen argues that the phrase genomenon hupo nomon, 'made under the law' describes Christ's obedience to the law, to redeem those who were likewise hupo nomon, 'under the law'. He denies that such obedience was necessary to qualify himself as the sin-bearing mediator. Christ possessed sufficient 'habitual grace' for this by virtue of his incarnation. Owen therefore argues that Christ has redeemed us, not only from the curse of the law, but also from our obligation to obey the law:

And if the Lord Christ hath redeemed us only from the curse of it by undergoing it, leaving us in ourselves to answer its obligation unto obedience, we are not freed nor delivered ....And the expression of 'under the law' doth in the first place, and properly, signify being under the obligation of it unto obedience, and consequentially only with a respect unto the curse.....Wherefore, the Lord Christ being made under the law for us, he yielded perfect obedience unto it for us; which is therefore imputed unto us.' (56)

Owen is careful to emphasise that the Apostle's statement comprehends both the ceremonial Jewish law and the moral law. The former was only temporary, yet the latter 'is of an eternal obligation'. Even so, Christ has delivered us not only from the ceremonial law, but from the moral law also, both its 'curse' and our obligation to obey it.

Owen's exegesis makes it virtually impossible for him to avoid

(56) JF, p.272.

the charge of antinomianism. If the eternal obligation of obedience to the law is met by Christ on the sinner's behalf, then the believer is no longer accountable. If the believer is reckoned as 'holy in Christ' then both pardon and inherent holiness become unnecessary and quite meaningless.

In Wesley's brief note on Galatians 4:4, he agrees with Owen that Christ was 'Both under the precept, and under the curse' of the law (57). However, redemption from being under the law only extends to 'the curse of it'. Elsewhere, Wesley links the text with Galatians 3:13, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' 'This tells me,' writes Wesley, 'that 'Christ hath redeemed us' (all that believe) from the curse, or punishment, justly due to our past transgressions of God's law. But it speaks not a word of redeeming us from the law, any more than from love or heaven.' (58) 'In other words, He redeemed them from the 'condemnation of this law', not from 'obedience to it'. In this respect they are still 'not without law to God, but under the law to Christ'. (I Corinthians 9:21).' (59)

Once again, it is interesting to observe support for Wesley's view from non-Arminian sources. Calvin clearly teaches that believers only have exemption from the 'bondage' of the law. 'Moreover, we are not so exempted from the law by Christ's benefit

(57) Notes, Galatians 4:4.

(58) DA I, p.261.

(59) DA II, p.270.

that we no longer owe any obedience to the teaching of the law and may do what we please. For it is the perpetual rule of a good and holy life.' (60) In short, the believer's obligation to the law has not ceased. Among modern commentators, William Hendriksen would be sympathetic to Owen's general theological outlook, yet, like Wesley, he interprets Galatians 4:4 in the light of 3:13. Although he says that Christ came 'vicariously to bear the law's penalty and to satisfy its demand of perfect obedience', yet redemption is only from the curse of the law. 'Even the verb - redeem - is the same. Hence, see the explanation of 3:13.' (61)

Wesley's reference to I Corinthians 9:21 is an important one. Owen does not appear to comment on, or even cite the verse. The believer is not, according to the Apostle, anomos Theo, 'without the law to God', but ennomos Christo, 'in, or under, the law to Christ'. (R.V. 'under law to Christ'; R.S.V. 'under the law of Christ'.) Wesley says that Christians are 'as much as ever under its moral precepts'. In Christ, 'Christians will be under the law for ever.' (62) Calvin anticipates the R.S.V. 'He describes it explicitly as indeed 'the law of Christ'....for he is pointing out that everything which makes for a perfect law for right living is included in the teaching of Christ.' (63)

Hodge expounds the Apostle to be saying that 'he did not act

(60) Comment, Galatians 4:4.

(61) A Commentary on Galatians (1969), pp.159-160.

(62) Notes, I Corinthians 9:21.

(63) Comment, I Corinthians 9:21.

as without law to God, i.e. without regard to the obligation to the moral law; but as under law to Christ....he was not under the Jewish law; but he was under the moral law.' (64)

Owen's exposition of this issue is arguably anomalous. Although he teaches that, for justification, Christ has fulfilled the believer's obligation perfectly <sup>to</sup> obey the law, he does not deny a continuing legal obligation in the believer's sanctification. The Savoy Declaration sums up Owen's position:

Although true Believers be not under the law, as a Covenant of Works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the Will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly.... (65)

It appears then that although Owen is antinomian with respect to justification, he is not so in regard to sanctification. His view seems to suggest that if a believer is delivered from the law (as well as its curse) in justification, he is again placed under it for sanctification. The Antinomians proper saw such a position as grossly inconsistent. They argued that the believer's deliverance from the law was total and perpetual (66). They would argue that even Owen's view of the law as a continuing rule of duty amounted to a return to legalism. Tobias Crisp denied that any relationship existed between the law and the believer's sanctification. 'Free grace is the teacher of good works.' (67)

(64) A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1958 rep.), p.165.

(65) Op. cit., ed. Matthews, p.100. See Owen's Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit, Works, Vol. 3, pp.604f, 'Necessity of holiness proved from the commands of God in the law and the gospel.' See also The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance, Works, Vol. 11, p.295.

(66) See Toon, Hypercalvinism, p.54.

(67) Ibid, p.54 and William Young, Antinomianism, in Encyclopedia of Christianity, ed. Palmer (1964), pp.270-278. See also Iain H. Murray, Antinomianism: New England's First Controversy, BOT, Issues 178-179 (1978). Also, K. M. Cambell, Antinomian Controversies of the 17th Century, in Living the Christian Life,

The basic weakness of the antinomian view is easily stated. If the believer is, strictly speaking, 'law-less', then no norm exists to define the reality of his indwelling sin, i.e. it is transgression of the law, (I John 3:4). Theoretically at least, sin becomes non-existent. 'Where no law is, there is no transgression,' (Romans 4:15). Confession of sin thus has no relevance. Furthermore, the concept of sanctification, let alone that of pardon, becomes subjectively meaningless since the believer is 'holy in Christ'. What is significant here is that the logic of antinomianism takes its rise from the type of view of justification espoused by Owen. He cannot therefore reply to the criticism that if Christ's active obedience to the law has, by imputation, cancelled the believer's obligation, then he has no more need of pardon than Christ had. Thus, even the atonement becomes unnecessary, as Piscator argued.

Reversing Owen's argument, the law has never ceased to be a rule of duty, either in sanctification or justification. It is because sin is a failure in dutiful obedience that atonement becomes necessary for deliverance from the 'curse' or penal demands of the law. Under no circumstances has the law's obligation ever ceased (68), and Christ's subjection to the law to 'redeem them that were under the law' applies only to the penalty of the law. In short,

(67) continued/ Westminster Conference Report (1974), pp.61f.

(68) See David P. Fuller, Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? (1983).

the gospel is not opposed to the law, but to its penal consequences.

Christ's active obedience therefore vindicated the law, but his passive obedience satisfied its penal demands on behalf of penitent offenders.

To be fair to Owen, his ultimate concern is a pastoral one. He is concerned to help those under spiritual conviction to know salvation and peace. The anxious enquirer asks, 'How can I be reconciled to God when I have transgressed His Holy Law? Owen's answer appears to be: 'Do not be alarmed that you fail to obey the law. Christ has redeemed us from both the curse and our obligation to obey it. Repent and trust in Him, whose righteousness, both passive and active, is imputed to all who believe. Thus you are justified before God.' Owen's concern to attribute salvation entirely to divine grace is obvious. However, his solution possesses considerable incoherence, for reasons given above. The idea that Christ has discharged the believer from his legal obligation can easily lead to a sense of false security. Dubious peace of conscience could arise from the thought 'It doesn't matter if I can't obey. The law has no claim upon me. I am righteous in Christ.'

Wesley's solution appears more coherent and Scriptural. 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, whose holy demands are as eternal as God himself. Repent and trust in Christ who obediently

satisfied the law's penal requirements for us. You are thus pardoned or justified. This is the righteousness of faith.' In this solution, there is no trace of antinomianism, neither does the believer lay claim to another's habitual righteousness. Pardon is real righteousness. Whilst gratitude becomes the incentive to holiness of life, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the law continues to arouse the need of daily pardon, and the gospel meets that need.

Despite his denials to the contrary, Owen cannot logically press the necessity of that 'holiness without which no man shall see the Lord' (Hebrews 12:14) if Christ's active righteousness is imputed to the believer. For Wesley, his questionable perfectionism apart, this need for holiness poses no logical problems. Imparted righteousness (or inherent holiness) is as necessary for salvation as imputed righteousness (or pardon). Where Owen stresses the need for a righteousness more than that of mere innocence in justification, Wesley affirms that such righteousness is truly the province of sanctification. Indeed, Christ's active righteousness is arguably relevant to the believer's sanctification, rather than his justification; it becomes a basis for emulation. 'He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.' (I John 2:6). Sanctification is therefore the subjective correlate



of justification. The work of Christ is thus seen as the meritorious basis of both remission of sin and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Both are essential for salvation:- the sinner's righteousness is the pardon of sin, accompanied by subjective renewal as its necessary correlate.

It remains to ask, is there any exegetical basis for Owen's teaching that biblical references to Christ's obedience necessarily include his active obedience? The references in question may be taken together.

2. Romans 5:19. 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'
3. Philippians 2:8. 'And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'
4. Hebrews 5:8. 'Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.'

Owen affirms that Christ's obedience referred to in these statements comprehends both his passive and active obedience, and that such combined obedience is imputed to believers as their righteousness. 'That the passive obedience of Christ is here only intended is false.' (69) 'In this place (i.e. Romans 5) hupakoe, verse 19 and dikaioma, verse 18 are the same, - obedience and righteousness.....' (70) 'It cannot clearly be evinced that there is any such thing, in propriety of speech, as passive obedience;

(69) Communion, p.163.

(70) JF. p.274.

obedience is doing, to which passion or suffering cannot belong.' (71)  
'He suffered in the whole course of his obedience, from the womb to the cross; and he obeyed in all his sufferings unto the last moment wherein he expired.' (72)

Owen seems to be suggesting that the Apostle's use of hupakoe primarily signifies active obedience. So-called passive obedience is only hupakoe when it is regarded as an action. Owen is surely correct to observe that, in a sense, Christ's death was the culmination of his active obedience. However, the question still remains, is the Apostle referring to the obedience of Christ in his voluntary death, or the obedience of his life, as the basis of the sinner's justification?

Wesley has no doubt that the obedience of Romans 5:19 is the death of Christ, and the consequent righteousness imputed to the believer is his justification or pardon. (73) Christ's death, says Wesley, is 'the greatest instance both of humiliation and obedience.' (74) Furthermore, Wesley declares that 'Christ 'learned obedience when he began to suffer; when He applied Himself to drink that cup; obedience in suffering and dying.' (75)

Despite all Owen's attempts to stress the active element in Christ's total obedience, it is doubtful whether he can substantiate his case. In none of the contexts of the verses in question is any

(71) Communion, p.163.

(72) JF, p.274.

(73) Notes, Romans 5:19.

(74) Ibid, Philippians 2:8.

(75) Ibid, Hebrews 5:8.

reference made to Christ's obedience to the law in his life. Romans 5:18-19 is surely to be interpreted by verse 9 'being now justified by his blood'. Had Owen been correct, Paul should have included 'his life'. The Apostle should likewise have written in Philippians 2:8 that Christ 'became obedient in his life to the law, as well as in his death....' In Hebrews 5, the scope of Christ's sufferings is clearly confined to his death.

Again, Calvin comments that since 'we are made righteous by the obedience of Christ, we deduce from this that Christ, in satisfying the Father, has procured righteousness for us.' (76) Although Calvin says that this righteousness of Christ is 'imputed to us', he plainly understands this to be Christ's passive righteousness. 'The sum of the whole is that Christ has attained righteousness for sinners by his death....' (77) Calvin clearly limits the obedience of Christ intended in Philippians 2:8 to his death. This is even more emphatic elsewhere. 'The First purpose of the sufferings of Christ was that in this way He should be made accustomed to obedience ....This passage not only speaks of the example of Christ, but goes further and says that by His obedience Christ has blotted out our transgressions. He became the author of our salvation because He made us just in the sight of God, when he remedied the disobedience of Adam by a contrary act of obedience.' (78)

(76) Comment, Romans 5:19.

(77) Ibid, Romans 5:8.

(78) Ibid, Hebrews 5:8,9.

It cannot be denied that, in the exegesis of these key biblical statements, Wesley is much closer to Calvin than Owen appears to be. One might say that the Arminian evangelist is more strictly Calvinistic than the high Calvinist theologian is. Indeed, Owen's whole approach reflects not so much Calvin's view of the issues, but the modifications for which Theodore Beza was responsible. William Cunningham is plainly embarrassed by this suggestion. He refuses to be impressed by the evidence, and his supposition that Calvin would not have denied Beza's type of view is totally unconvincing (79).

This entire discussion further confirms the conclusion, denied by Cunningham, that the Arminians were the true heirs of Calvin in their doctrine of justification. The line of succession appears to go from Calvin to John Wesley via Piscator and the Dutch Arminians. However, despite the interest attached to theological traditions and personalities, it may be safely argued that Wesley's exegesis and arguments reflect the biblical teaching about Christ's obedience more accurately than Owen's approach does. Having established this, one may conclude that, as Wesley argues, all the references cited by Owen in which 'righteousness' is imputed to believers intend the pardon of sin only (e.g. Zechariah 3:4,5; Isaiah 61:10; Romans 5:18; 8:3,4; I Corinthians 1:30 and Philipians 3:9, etc.). In short, wherever 'righteousness' is used in the context of justification, it always

(79) The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, pp.402,404.

means 'pardon or remission of sin'. Thus 'the righteousness of faith' (Romans 10:6-10) is the 'forgiveness of sins or justification'. This is why the Apostle states that 'faith is imputed for righteousness'. By faith, the sinner is pardoned or justified. It is perfectly clear why Owen virtually negates explicit biblical statements as these. For him, the righteousness of faith apparently conflicts with the active righteousness of Christ. Faith is not to be seen as a 'work' of 'new obedience' in his view. If the 'passive righteousness of Christ only is imputed to us in the non-imputation of sin, and that on the condition of our faith and new obedience' this amounts to 'exalting them into the room of the righteousness of Christ....' (80)

For Wesley, there is no conflict whatsoever. Faith is the occasion whereby the pardon made available through Christ's death or passive obedience is received. Even though this faith is the work of divine grace (Ephesians 2:8), it is also the work of the believer (John 6:28-29; I Thessalonians 1:3). The gift of grace enables sinners to believe; it is both the work of grace and the work or act of the sinner himself (81). This act is his 'new obedience' (Romans 1:5; 16:26; Hebrews 5:9) - God's work, and the believer's work (Philippians 2:12.13). 'Rabbi' Duncan writes, 'There is a true and a false synergia. That God works half, and man the other half, is false; that God works all, and man does all,

(80) Communion, p.165.

(81) See Herman Riderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology, tr. J. R. de Witt (1977), p.179.

is true.' (82)

It would seem then that Owen's overall scheme is the consequence of an excessive 'over-reaction' to Roman Catholic and Socinian theology. If Reformation theology may be regarded as 'normative' - and we have seen that both Owen and Wesley believed this to be so - then Owen's theology of justification must be described as 'ultra-orthodox'. Somewhat surprisingly, Wesley's position appears a more consistent expression of the theology of the Reformation although, from Owen's standpoint, it must appear as a betrayal of that theology.

What then of the 'middle-ground' theologians, Baxter and Tillotson? Like Wesley in the eighteenth, both Baxter and Tillotson in the seventeenth century were accused of making dangerous concessions to Roman and Socinian theology. J. I. Packer's relatively recent evaluation of Baxter is rather typical of this traditional criticism. Like his predecessors, Packer assumes that seventeenth century Calvinism is 'normative' Calvinism. He seems totally unaware of the evidence brought forward in this thesis which demands a radical reappraisal of the very assumptions on which he rejects Baxter's contribution. In several instances, it is difficult to see any justice in Packer's criticisms of Baxter, in view of explicit statements by Baxter himself.

Packer is not impressed with Baxter's criticism of antinomianism.

(82) John ('Rabbi') Duncan, Colloquia Peripatetica (1907), (ed. W. Knight), p.30.

He assumes that Baxter's view of the role of Christ's active righteousness is deficient. Yet Baxter's logic is entirely compelling, if not entirely original. If Christ's active righteousness is reckoned as the believer's, then, says Baxter, 'we could need no pardon, for he that is reputed to be innocent, by fulfilling all the law, is reputed never to have sinned: And he can have no pardon of sin, who hath no sin to be pardoned. Therefore, such an imputation of Christ's righteousness to us would make his satisfaction null or vain....' (83)

Packer incorrectly assumes that Calvin's view of imputation coincides with that of 'orthodox Calvinism' when he rejects Baxter's view that faith is the formal cause of justification (84). Here Calvin is quite explicit: '....what can the formal or instrumental cause be but faith?' (85) This, of course, only illustrates a precedent for Baxter's view in Calvin; it does not validate the idea itself. Indeed, Calvin's discussion of salvation at this point is undisguised in his use of scholastic terminology, when he writes of the efficient, material and formal causes of salvation. This resort to Aristotelian terminology is far from typical in Calvin, who generally repudiated such usage (86).

Baxter does say that 'Faith and repentance are our righteousness by which we must be justified....subordinate to Christ's

(83) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.59.

(84) See The Doctrine of Justification in Development and Decline Among the Puritans, op. cit., p.21 (n.11). This paper provides a summary of Packer's unpublished D.Phil. thesis, The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the thought of Richard Baxter (Oxford, 1954), and reference will generally be made to the summary throughout.

(85) Institutes, III:xiv:17.

(86) See Tony Lane, The Quest for the Historical Calvin in EQ Vol. LV, No.2 (April, 1983), p.98. Packer notes that the phrase 'formal cause', and the distinction between active and passive obedience do not appear in the Westminster Confession (op. cit., p.22). However, the latter is present in the Savoy Declaration.

merits.' (87) But this is not to confuse the 'formal cause' of salvation with its 'ground' as Packer does. Although Baxter denies that 'Christ's righteousness imputed' is a 'Scripture phrase', he is prepared to include even the active righteousness of Christ when he says that 'his righteousness be the meritorious cause of ours.... And thus (in this sense only) Christ's righteousness, merit and satisfaction may be said to be imputed to us, in that it is thus given us....' (88)

Like Calvin (89), Baxter says that 'our faith now is instead of our innocency....Paul saith, that faith is imputed to us for righteousness. To deny this sense, is to use violence with the text.' (90) 'All the righteousness which formally justifieth us, is our own....Pardon of sin is made our own....Though Christ's righteousness was the meritorious cause of all this....' (91) There is nothing in Baxter's exposition at this point which is remotely alien to the thought of the Apostle Paul.

Packer's major criticism of Baxter is directed at his 'New Law' conception of the Gospel. 'Baxter follows Grotius in maintaining that when God purposed to glorify Himself by restoring fallen man, He carried out his plan not by satisfying the law, but by changing it. A new law was brought in, which waived the penal requirement of the original law. This assumes that the demand for retribution

(87) CT, Bk. I, Part 2, p.71.

(88) Ibid, pp.63,64. See also EC, p.259.

(89) Comment, Galatians 3:6.

(90) CT, p.66.

(91) Ibid, p.74.



in the original law was not grounded in the nature of God, but only in the exigences of government. What is at issue here is the divine holiness. Reformed theology sees both the precept and the penalty of the law of God as a permanent expression of God's eternal and unchangeable holiness and justice, and argues that God does not save sinners at His law's expense; rather, He saves them by satisfying His law on their behalf, so that He continues to be just when He becomes their justifier. Baxter's scheme makes the wrath of God against sin something less than a revelation of His abiding character, and so opens the door to the idea that benevolence is really the whole essence of His moral being: an idea made explicit by the Liberalism of a later age.' (92) This criticism has been quoted at length in order to facilitate some important observations both on Baxter's views and Packer's evaluation of them.

Baxter distinguishes between the Law of innocency and the Law of grace, and that God saves man in terms of the latter and not the former. This state of affairs has existed since the fall of man. The 'first edition' of the law or covenant of grace was made with all mankind in Adam and Noah. Even the era of the Mosaic covenant falls within the era of grace as Baxter understands it. He says God 'hath proclaimed his name....even in the terrors of Mount Sinai, to be a God gracious, merciful, long suffering, pardoning, etc....' (93) The Gospel, as revealed in the New Testament, is the 'last edition'

(92) Op. cit., pp.27,28. See Packer's thesis, pp.303f. See also E. F. Kevan, The Grace of Law (1964), p.67.

(93) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.50.

of the law of grace. In Baxter's view, the introduction of the law of grace did not involve a new scheme which was 'strong' on grace and 'weak' on law, as Packer seems to imply. The only material change was the addition of an element of mercy in God's dealings with mankind, occasioned by the advent of sin.. No dilution of God's righteousness occurred whatsoever. It might be said that the 'new' still embraced the main features of the 'old'. 'The Scripture assureth us,' says Baxter, 'that it is the law of grace, and not only that of innocency, which all the world is governed by....' (94) Baxter is careful to point out that the 'new law', although it contains the remedial element of grace, still contains the 'law of nature' or innocency, and 'Moses' Decalogue'.(95) Packer implies that Baxter, in affirming the former, negates the latter. There is nothing in Baxter's teaching which conflicts with the Westminster Confession (XIX:II), 'This law, after (man's) fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered By God on mount Sinai in ten commandments....' What Baxter does is to highlight the provision of grace, i.e. mercy and pardon, even in the Mosaic law.

It would appear that Packer 'over-rates' the significance of the 'change' from the 'old' law to the 'new' law. From his exposition of Baxter's position, it appears more of a 'change' than it really is. Alteration there certainly is, but more of addition than

(94) Ibid, p.49 (emphasis mine).

(95) Ibid, p.43.

subtraction. Furthermore, Packer's view that God satisfied his law on behalf of sinners is a failure to grasp the nature of the 'pre-lapsarian' law. It did not allow the concept of satisfaction by the sufferings of a substitute, as Baxter is careful to state. 'He that is judged by the Law of Innocency, must be justified by personal, perfect perpetual obedience (not by another's) or be condemned.....' (96) The law's retribution 'made it due to the sinner himself. And another's suffering for him fulfillleth not the law (which never said, either thou or another for thee shalt die).....' (97)

In Baxter's view, had God strictly executed the 'old law', then only his justice and holiness would have been satisfied. However, 'The nature of God is infinitely good....and so that he first seeketh the glory of his mercy; and exerciseth justice in man's destruction, but as his second work: He that saved no man ....upon the terms of innocency, but all by grace, and never else took one soul to heaven who had not first deserved hell, doth surely first seek the glory of his grace.' (98)

Packer is incorrect to attribute to Baxter the idea that God saves sinners at the expense of his holiness and justice. Christ 'suffered in the stead and place of sinners, to satisfy God's wisdom, truth and justice.....' (99) even though, strictly speaking, his sufferings 'satisfied the Law-giver as he is above his own law

(96) EC, p.154.

(97) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.40.

(98) Ibid, p.50.

(99) Ibid, p.39.

(of innocency, i.e.), and could dispense with it (i.e. its penal requirement), his justice being satisfied and saved.' (100)

Furthermore, for those who reject the gospel, under the law of grace, 'The sentence is peremptory, excluding all hope of dispensation and pardon, to the final rejectors of its grace, for ever ....' (101) Had the law of innocency been carried out, its execution would have been at the expense of God's mercy and grace. Under the law of grace, both God's justice and his mercy are satisfied. It is not executed at the expense of justice. In other words, the law of grace expresses the nature of God comprehensively: it satisfies God's demand for retribution and his desire to show mercy. In truth, it had to be 'introduced' if salvation was to be possible at all.

The 'new law' - (which is hardly a 'recent' innovation, being in force since the fall of man) - is not less of an expression of God's wrath against sin than the 'old law', as Packer seems to imagine. It is a fuller expression of the nature of God, not an impoverished one. Human guilt thus possesses two components, arising from both the violation of the ten commandments and the rejection of the gospel remedy. Transgressing the law of grace is therefore more serious than merely transgressing the law of innocency, not less. Thus, to accuse Baxter of 'opening the door to the idea that benevolence is

(100) Ibid, p.40. As has been pointed out, Baxter only teaches that the law of innocency was dispensed with in isolation from considerations of grace. Its penal requirement is now remissible in virtue of Christ's death, but its legal character is included within the law of grace.

(101) Ibid, p.49.

really the whole essence of God's moral being' is to misread Baxter completely. Baxter insists that benevolence is part of the essence of God's nature, but certainly not the whole. Thus, the law of grace is a fuller revelation of the nature of God, in which all his attributes are displayed. The 'old law' was but a partial revelation of God's nature. Even allowing for Baxter's excessive use of political analogies, and here Packer is surely correct, this is what Baxter was seeking to emphasise when he wrote that 'the true reason of the satisfactoriness of Christ's sufferings was, that they were a most apt means for the demonstration of the governing justice, holiness, wisdom and mercy of God, by which God could attain the ends of the law and government better than by executing the law on the world in its destruction....' (102) Baxter seems to mean 'better' in a utilitarian sense, and Packer is right to question this. This consideration apart, it is plain that Baxter is seeking to present a balanced theology of the divine attributes.

When Packer said that God cannot save sinners at his law's expense, this prompts the question, 'What law do you refer to?' Baxter would deny that anything is sacrificed if the new law is envisaged, but he would equally insist that had the law of innocency been executed, this would have been at the expense of God's grace

(102) Ibid, pp.40-41 (emphasis mine).

and mercy. Packer does not seem to appreciate this point.

It is arguable that Packer exaggerates the influence of the 'political method' on Baxter's theology. At worst, the analogies obscure an otherwise cogent biblical case. The 'utilitarian' aspect apart, Baxter was anxious to root his theology in the nature of God, and not in political ideology. It is all too easy to gain the impression from Packer's exposition of Baxter that somehow the 'gospel' has superceded the 'law' in an almost antinomian sense. However, this is obviously false. Equally, yet paradoxically, Baxter is charged with legalism in describing the gospel as a 'new law'. This has obviously arisen from a common misunderstanding of Paul's statement 'for you are not under the law, but under grace' (Romans 6:14). It is highly questionable exegesis to imply that being 'under grace' means being 'law-less', which is precisely the position of the antinomians. As has been shown already, the grace of the gospel is opposed, not to the law, but the 'curse' of the law, (Galatians 3:13).<sup>\*</sup> Flanked therefore by both antinomianism and legalism, Baxter's teaching that God governs mankind not merely by the law of innocency but by the law of grace, amounts to saying that a change occurred, not so much from 'X' to 'Y', but from 'X' to 'X plus Y'. It goes without saying that the Christian is not under the Jewish law as such, yet

\* Note: Calvin expounds Romans 6:14 in the light of Galatians 3:13. 'Since the law is the rule of good living.....the proper solution...is that the only part of the law which is removed is the curse, to which all men who are beyond the grace of Christ are subject. Although Paul does not expressly state this, he hints at it.' Comment, Romans 6:15.

the provision of the Decalogue is ever in force. Although it was provocative for Baxter to speak of the gospel as the law of grace, he considered the phrases 'law of grace' and 'covenant of grace' synonymously. Since covenants have the force of laws where the parties are concerned, Baxter's language cannot be strictly objected to. It was clearly his detestation of antinomianism that influenced his choice of terminology. All these things considered, there is little in his overall scheme which is justly objectionable.

Baxter's so-called 'neonomianism' has always been a focus of controversy. It is hardly surprising that those with antinomian tendencies should view Baxter's scheme as heterodox. Packer is surely correct to point out that, under the influence of Grotius, Baxter casts much of his theological scheme into a 'political' mould. God the Father is 'Rector' and Christ is viewed as the 'Father's administrator' in God's kingdom (103). Thus, God's people are governed according to 'the law of grace'. It is to be admitted that, in many details, Baxter leans too heavily on concepts borrowed from the world of seventeenth century political theory. However, his greatest mistake is arguably an excessive use of political analogies. It is just as likely that Baxter was influenced by the very monarchical analogies found in the Bible.

(103) Ibid, pp.42f.

What he also does is to take seriously the Reformation understanding of Christ's three-fold office of prophet, priest and king. (104)

Baxter's description of the Covenant of grace as God's 'new law' has substantial support from the New Testament. The gospel is described as the 'law of faith' (Romans 3:27) and the 'law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:2). Paul speaks of 'the law of Christ' (Galatians 6:2), and James contrasts the 'royal law' with the 'law of liberty' (James 2:8,12). Elsewhere, Christ is described as 'head over all things to the church' (Ephesians 1:22) and believers are 'under the law to Christ' (I Corinthians 9:21). It is with this New Testament evidence in mind that Baxter refers to the 'ministry, and Word, and Holy Spirit of Christ' as 'a law of grace; even the law of liberty, and the law of the spirit of life, which freeth us from the law of sin and death.' (105) After stating that Christ's law (as opposed to the temporary Jewish ceremonial law) consists of the law of nature (or moral law) and the remedial law of the gospel, Baxter makes his point with great emphasis that the kingdom of grace is also a kingdom of order.

But as to them that insist on it, that the Gospel and New Covenant are no laws, and that we have none from Christ but the Decalogue and Old Testament; were I to write against them to purpose, I would plentifully prove them subverters of Christianity, and give full evidence against them, to any that believe the Holy Scriptures....and that he that feareth not breaking the Laws of Christ, shall hear at last 'Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.' (Luke 19:27)'.(106)

(104) Ibid, p.55.

(105) Ibid, p.43.

(106) Ibid, pp.43-44.



Apart from Packer's basic criticism of Baxter's 'neonomian' theology, it is difficult to see the justice of some of his other detailed objections. Remembering Baxter's insistence on the 'scripturalness' of faith being imputed to the believer as his righteousness, Packer comments, '....for a sinner pressed in conscience by the burden of uncleanness and guilt finds relief, not by reminding himself that his faith is evangelical righteousness according to the new law, but by looking to the cross of Christ.... Talk of one's faith as One's righteousness at such a time is at best frivolity and at worst a snare.' (107) Such an assessment of Baxter's position assumes a problem where there is none, as well as taking for granted a theory of the imputation of Christ's active righteousness which Baxter argued against. Baxter does believe in directing the sinner to the cross of Christ. 'Christ's sacrifice for sin, and his perfect holiness, are so far satisfactory and meritorious for all men, as that they render Christ a meet object for that faith in him which is commanded men....' (108)

Packer also argues that Baxter's scheme 'fails to come to terms with the representative headship of Christ, the second Adam, as this is set forth in Romans 5:12f....It is, of course, on this unique federal relationship between Christ and His people that the imputing to them of His righteousness is based.' (109) Yet Baxter

(107) Op. cit., p.27.

(108) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.51.

(109) Op. cit., pp.26,27.

could not be more explicit here.

That as we hold that Adam was the natural root or parent of mankind; so also that Christ was the Federal root of all the saved....But it was individual persons in whose stead or place Christ suffered - and to that end he undertook and performed his office, and merited all this by his perfect righteousness: So that hereby he made Himself a Federal Head and root of a holy Society (his church)....' (110)

Packer insists that Baxter's 'political method' is 'theologically vicious', with 'bad effects all along the line' (111). He accuses Baxter of virtually reducing 'sin' to 'crime'. 'This externalises sin, so that its indwelling power in the individual, and its corporate influence, are understressed.' One quotation from Baxter is sufficient to answer this charge.

All ministers, tutors, parents, Christians; yea, persons find how woefully hard it proveth to cure one sin; to cure the ignorant, the unbelieving, the hard-hearted, the proud, the lustful, the covetous, the passionate; much more the malignant enemies of God and holiness. What need of the sanctification of the Spirit, or the medicinal grace of Christ, if the very depraved will can do all in a moment of itself, and depose its enmity?' (112)

Baxter is also criticised for not seeing Christ as the 'Head of His people', yet his position seems perfectly clear. 'And Christ is first filled with his Spirit personally himself, that he may be a fit Head of vital influence to all his members, who by the previous operations of his Spirit are drawn and united to him.'(113) Packer also says that Baxter sees the death of Christ 'as one

(110) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, pp.77-78. See also Baxter's Paraphrase, Romans 5:12f.

(111) Op. cit., p.27.

(112) CT, Bk. 2, p.84.

(113) Ibid, p.178.

presupposition of our sins being remitted rather than the procuring cause of it....' But Baxter distinctly affirms that 'righteousness is imputed to us....which indeed is done for Christ's meritorious righteousness procuring it.' (114) Elsewhere, Christ's righteousness is described as 'the meritorious and procuring cause....'(115) Packer also charges Baxter with viewing the remission of sin 'as public pardon rather than personal forgiveness', making Christ 'remote' and 'more like a judge than a Saviour'. What Packer seems to miss is the significance of Paul's words that 'we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ' (II Corinthians 5:10). With this in mind, Baxter says 'all our past sins are pardoned at our first faith or conversion' yet justification is completed at the day of judgement 'which....is done by Christ as Judge, and so is an act of his kingly office' (116).

This leads to Packer's criticism of Baxter's view of faith as 'all egiance and commitment'. Without the 'dimension of self-despairing trust: faith appears less as the outstretched empty hand of a spiritual bankrupt than as the signing on of a resolute volunteer, a work of some strength and merit.' This is totally inaccurate. Baxter declares, 'To dream of meriting from God....is blasphemy and madness....' (117) On the nature of faith, Baxter writes that 'trusting Christ as a Saviour, to save us, with soul and body'

(114) Ibid, Bk. 1, Part 1, p.64.

(115) Paraphrase, Romans 5:18.

(116) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.85.

(117) Ibid, p.80.

involves 'the renouncing and letting go all other trust' (118), but he argues that there is more to faith than this. Packer is unaware that Baxter views faith as tripartite in character. Trust, as described above, is a matter of the heart, but faith embraces and includes 'the assent of the intellect' and 'the consent of the will'. There is an active as well as passive character to faith. Faith involves not only self-despairing trust, but also 'allegiance' and 'commitment'. True faith is all-inclusive. 'There is no justification by a partial faith.' (119) This teaching in Baxter will be especially relevant in the next chapter, where the relationship between trust and good works will be discussed.

This detailed vindication of Baxter has been necessary in the interests of an accurate assessment of the evidence. Packer is not just or accurate in his assessment of Baxter. The nineteenth century study by G. P. Fisher (120) and the recent one by N. H. Keeble (121) are in many ways more acceptable. Since Packer's criticism has been levelled at Baxter's doctrinal contribution, attention has been focused on the evidence in his doctrinal magnum opus, Catholic Theologie. This has been done deliberately, and for one reason. Packer says that 'Baxter was a great and saintly man; as a pastor, evangelist and devotional writer, no praise for him can be too high; but as a theologian he was, though brilliant,

(118) Ibid, p.45.

(119) Ibid, p.86.

(120) Op. cit.

(121) Op. cit.

something of a disaster.' (122) Since Baxter's pastoral achievement cannot really be divorced from his theological and doctrinal ideas, how can Packer justify the dichotomy he makes? All his criticisms could easily have been met by quotations from Baxter's practical works, but the evidence given from his Catholick Theologie implies an obvious harmony between Baxter's doctrinal and devotional activity. Furthermore, many of the ideas Packer objects to in Baxter's theology are to be found throughout the very practical writings (123) he praises so highly. It is true, the political terminology is largely absent in Baxter's evangelistic and pastoral writings, but there is no evidence for Packer's dichotomy. The same basic theological ideas discussed in the doctrinal works are evident in the devotional works.

It is not being suggested here that Baxter's theology is flawless, but that Packer and others have arrived at questionable conclusions about it. They have assessed him from the standpoint of an assumed seventeenth century definition of orthodoxy. As has been shown, if Reformation theology is employed as a criterion, different conclusions result. By this standard, Baxter's theology of election and the atonement place him decidedly in the 'middle-ground' between John Owen and John Wesley: he is neither high Calvinist, nor Arminian. A 'Reformation Calvinist' would aptly describe Baxter. In this

(122) Op. cit., p.27.

(123) See The Practical Works of Richard Baxter, Select Treatises, (1981).

context, what then is to be made of Baxter's views on justification?

A more just criticism than Packer's must be made, but from a rather different perspective. Unlike Calvin and the other reformers who always equated justification with pardon or remission of sin, Baxter taught a two-fold justification. Whereas Calvin teaches a necessary correlation between justification and sanctification, the latter being the subjective 'condition' of a justified man, Baxter describes both these correlata in terms of different types of justification. This is what Packer means by Baxter's theory of a 'double righteousness'. However, Baxter's mistake was not to exclude the imputation of Christ's active righteousness to the believer, as Packer argues. His mistake was not to see the strict equivalence between justification and pardon. Herein lay the chief source of his difficulties, which were, in measure, transmitted to Wesley. Even then, it was a partial error, rooted more in terminological ambiguities than in basic conceptions.

Baxter's idea of 'initial justification' is virtually identical to Calvin's. 'The Covenant of grace doth as certainly pardon or justify us for the merit of Christ's righteousness.' (124) Here, 'pardon' and 'justification' are treated synonymously. However, Baxter's strong antipathy towards antinomianism leads him to argue that 'Christ's righteousness is ours for the pardon of sin, and the

(124) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.59.

merit of grace and glory for us: but not instead of faith, repentance, sanctification or sincere obedience. He that hath not these, shall never be saved by Christ's righteousness. So far as we are sinners, a pardon is our righteousness: but so far as we are holy, it is not so....' (125) In other words, sanctification is viewed by Baxter as a secondary justification. Despite its obvious similarities, this position is different from the Roman one, since Baxter denies anything wrought in or by the believer to be meritorious. Christ's righteousness is the sole meritorious cause of salvation.

It is being argued here that Baxter is substantially correct to insist that the believer's 'faith and sincere obedience' are 'relevant' subject matter of his justification, but it is suggested that his ambiguous terminology and endless distinctions prevented him from communicating his fundamentally correct insights. For instance, writing of 'sincere obedience', he says 'This is the justification by works (as many are willing to call it, to make it odious) which I do assert and defend, and which I judge so necessary to be believed....' (126) Baxter himself distinguished between constitutive, sentential and executive senses of justification (not to speak of other 'correlate justifications' occasioned by various accusations against believers), which tend to confuse and bewilder

(125) Rich: Baxter's Confession of his Faith, Preface, p.(ix).

(126) Ibid, p.(x).

even the most careful reader!

Baxter is clearly trying to oppose the kind of incipient antinomian teaching found in John Owen. He is also conscious that the New Testament stresses the necessity of holiness and good works for salvation. Packer says that such a view is evidence of a 'streak of legalism' in Baxter's theological system, as if Baxter thought that 'law-keeping has no relevance for God or man save as work done to earn acceptance and salvation.' (127) Such a remark overlooks not only a significant corpus of New Testament data, but also the important distinction between means and motive. There is nothing mercenary in Baxter's conception of that holiness which leads to salvation, and which fits the believer for the service of God. 'Other service is undertaken for the love of the wages, but this is undertaken for the love of the Master and the work, and is wages itself to them that go through with it. For other service is but a means, and that to some inferior end; but this is a means to the everlasting perfection and blessedness of the soul....' (128)

Notwithstanding Baxter's very valid emphasis on the doctrine of sanctification, he prejudiced his entire case by employing the term 'justification' in a double sense. This was Baxter's way of doing what Calvin had done before him. The Reformer avoided the

(127) Op. cit., p.26.

(128) Directions to a Sound Conversion, op. cit., p.584.



rigid separation of justification from sanctification (129), yet he always maintained that 'justification' was equivalent to 'pardon', even though sanctification was the necessary correlate, or subjective 'condition' of justification. Since, for Calvin, justification was progressive rather than instantaneous and complete as Owen thought, his teaching did not lead to the kind of abuse Baxter was trying to combat. Baxter could have successfully secured all his emphases had he followed Calvin's usage of 'justification'. In fact, he nearly did remain strictly 'Calvinist', and early in his career(1655): 'I think it had been well for the church, if we had used less in our disputes the term justification....If we had treated more fully about remission of sin alone, and under that term....I think the church would reap much benefit by it. Doubtless we might much easier convince a Papist....when so many of ours do take remission and justification for the same thing.'(130)

Had Baxter remained true to this early insight, instead of introducing a concept of double justification so totally alien to the New Testament, his valuable contribution might have escaped the charge of heterodoxy. What he regarded as a subsidiary, justifying righteousness should really have been construed as the necessary subjective correlate of pardon or justification, as Calvin did.

Baxter was constrained to argue as he did because of a deficient

(129) See the evidence cited in chapter one, i.e. Institutes, III:11:6; III:16:1; Comment, John 15:10; Romans 8:4.

(130) Confession of Faith, p.vii.

view of faith as mere passive trust advocated by the antinomians and others. The discussion then centres upon the nature of that faith which justifies, or, put differently, what is the character of the religious psychology of those who are justified? Is faith mere trust of the heart, or does it embrace the obedience of the will? In what precise sense are justification and sanctification necessarily linked? It is at this point that Archbishop Tillotson seems to provide a solution to the problem Baxter was grappling with, a solution in fact hinted at by both Baxter and Calvin.

Like Baxter, Tillotson was accused of sacrificing some of the distinctive emphases of Reformation theology. Wesley's own criticism of Tillotson has already been noted (131). However, despite his persistent stress on the necessity of good works, Tillotson cannot be regarded justly as other than a good Protestant. He repudiates the 'doctrine of the Church of Rome' in no uncertain terms. They teach 'as if they could drive a strict bargain with God for eternal life and happiness; and have treated Him in so insolent a manner, by their doctrine of the merit of their devotions and good works....' (132) Although Tillotson is opposed to the Roman doctrine of merit, he is equally concerned to avoid the libertine and antinomian position. 'Indeed our blessed Saviour hath merited for us all the reward of eternal life, upon the

(131) Works, Vol. 7, p.433.

(132) The Parable of the Ten Virgins, Till. III, P.366.

conditions of faith and repentance and obedience: But the infinite merit of his obedience and sufferings will be of no benefit and advantage to us, if we ourselves be not really and inherently righteous.' (133)

Whilst therefore 'Christ's perfect obedience and sufferings' are the sole meritorious cause of salvation, Tillotson very lucidly refutes the theory of the imputation of Christ's active righteousness, as taught by Owen.

And the holiest man that ever was upon earth, can no more assign and make over his righteousness, or repentance, or any part of either, to another who wants it, than a man can bequeath his wisdom, or learning to his heir, or his friend: No more than a sick man be restored to health by virtue of the physick which another man hath taken. Let no man therefore think of being good by a deputy' or being admitted to heaven 'by proxy'. (134)

Only if Owen's ultra-orthodoxy is regarded as normative can Tillotson's position be held suspect. Indeed, it is interesting to observe the close affinity between Tillotson's and Calvin's treatment of justification. Whilst he acknowledges that 'justification' has other uses in the New Testament, Tillotson still affirms that 'when it is applied to a sinner, it signifies nothing else but the pardon of his sin'. (135) In expounding Acts 13:38-39 and Paul's citation of Psalm 32 in Romans 4:6-8, Tillotson's exegesis is identical to Calvin's.

The man unto whom God imputeth righteousness, is the man whom God justifies....From hence I reason, if according to the Apostle those propositions be equivalent, Blessed is the man

(133) Ibid, p.370.

(134) Ibid, p.370.

(135) Of the Christian Faith which Sanctifies, Justifies and Saves, Till. II, p.479.

whose iniquities are forgiven, and Blessed is the man who God justifies, then according to the Apostle, justification and forgiveness of sins are all one: but those propositions are equivalent, if the Apostle cites the text out of the Psalms pertinently. (136)

Tillotson strictly adheres to this definition of justification, i.e. it never means anything other than the pardon of sin. His account is thus more satisfactory than Baxter's in this respect. Furthermore, the necessary connection between justification and sanctification seen in Calvin is similarly stated in Tillotson. 'The great condition of our justification and acceptance with God, is the real renovation of our hearts and lives.' (137) The continuum view of justification, clearly evident in Calvin, is made explicit by Tillotson. Subjective renewal is the necessary correlate of justification 'whether by justification be meant our first justification upon our faith and repentance, or our continuance in this state, or our final justification by our solemn acquittal and absolution at the Great Day....' (138)

When John Wesley criticised Tillotson's view of justification in 1741 (139), he rejected what he himself later embraced. Tillotson was arguing against a false conception of faith. To affirm that good works were relevant to justification was not to deny salvation by faith alone, as Wesley then thought. It was to high-light the nature of that faith which alone is justifying and to exclude 'works' only

(136) Ibid, pp.479-480. See the Calvin evidence in chapter 1.

(137) Of the nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity, in order to Justification and Salvation, Till. I, p.390.

(138) Ibid, p.390.

(139) True Christianity Defended, Works, Vol. 7, p.433.

in the sense intended by Paul. 'So that we cannot be said to be justified by faith alone, unless that faith include in it obedience.'  
(140)

With regard to Calvin, it is not being argued that he is as explicit as Tillotson here, only that he 'hints' at the idea. In his discussion of faith, Calvin writes 'Paul designates faith as the obedience which is given to the Gospel (Romans 1:5); and writing to the Philippians, he commends them for the obedience of faith (Philippians 2:17)....Assent itself....is more a matter of the heart than the head, of the affection than the intellect. For this reason, it is termed 'the obedience of faith' (Romans 1:5)....' (141)  
This is a matter for the next chapter. Suffice it to say that Calvin provides the basis for conceiving of faith as Tillotson does, in tripartite terms, embracing the mind, the heart and the will. But this is to anticipate the analysis.

It becomes clear therefore that Owen's theory of imputation, derived ultimately from Theodore Beza, created major difficulties in Protestant theological thought. Once it was assumed that the high-Calvinist theory of a dual-element imputation was 'orthodox', it was inevitable that any hesitation in accepting this should result in charges of heterodoxy. The fact that the Arminians - the sworn enemies of unconditional election, equated justification with

(140) Christian Faith, Till. II, p.476.

(141) Institutes, III:2:6,8.

pardon was sufficient to prejudice the orthodox Calvinists against seeing that they had become heterodox on the subject of imputation. Even amongst the Reformed, Piscator's trenchant analysis had little effect in impeding the advance of ultra-orthodoxy. Thus, on the subject of justification, the Arminians became the heirs of Calvin in several respects. As has been demonstrated, Wesley made much of the affinity between his position and that of Calvin, although he was largely perpetuating the earlier Arminian claim. However, Wesley needlessly antagonised his high Calvinist opponents with his doctrine of perfection, an idea not derived from Calvin or any of the Reformers.

Between them, Baxter and Tillotson represent the theology of the 'middle-ground'. Baxter was one with Owen in teaching the doctrines of divine election and predestination, yet he rejected Owen's theory of imputation as well as his doctrine of limited atonement. His scheme of justification involved a conceptual ambiguity rather than a fundamental error. Where Baxter was confusing, Tillotson lucidly clarified the issues. His 'low' Arminianism notwithstanding, he advocates, albeit more coherently, and without the embarrassment of Wesley's perfectionism, the very view Wesley himself was attempting to propagate in the eighteenth century. The latter's residual difficulties largely arose from the influence of

Baxter. All in all, on the subject of justification, as well as the atonement, the Baxter-Tillotson via media perpetuated the theology of John Calvin himself, at a time when Calvinism had really become, in the hands of Owen and others, 'ultra-Calvinism'. This observation has important implications, chiefly because the exegetical objections to Owen's position do not appear to apply to Calvin's significantly different teaching.

The discussion has already touched on the nature of saving faith and its relationship to good works. This, as we shall see, is an issue of fundamental importance to the entire analysis, and must now receive attention.

3: Faith and Good Works.

John Owen agreed with the common Puritan view, that Reformation divines held a deficient understanding of the nature of justifying faith, vis-a-vis assurance. (1) The Reformers argued that assurance was a necessary ingredient of that faith which is truly justifying. A believer without assurance was a contradiction in terms. (2) Owen explains the mistaken conception of the Reformers in terms of their reaction to the medieval view that assurance of salvation was not possible in this life. The stimulus to their thought was a pastoral one, therefore, as Owen indicates:

That which inclined those great and holy persons so to express themselves in this matter, and to place the essence of faith in the highest acting of it, ...was the state of the consciences of men with whom they had to do. (3)

The re-definition of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith is a matter which also concerned John Wesley. It has been noted that in the early days of his evangelical conversion, the preaching of this doctrine featured prominently. Wesley placed his stamp of approval on the views of the Anglican reformers in his own sermon Justification by Faith (1746). Wesley quotes from The Second Tome of Homilies (1562), where in The Second Sermon on the Passion, faith is described as 'a sure trust and confidence in the mercies of God....that God both hath and will forgive our sins, that he hath accepted us again into his favour....solely for the merits of Christ's

- (1) See William Cunningham, The Reformers and the Doctrine of Assurance, in op. cit., pp.111f.
- (2) R. T. Kendall defends Calvin's position here, op. cit., pp.18-20, 208. See Paul Helm's reply, op. cit., pp.23f.
- (3) JF, p.86.



death and passion.' (4) Faith is clearly understood to include assurance; it is sure trust. At the first Methodist Conference of 1744, it was specifically stated that 'all true Christians have such a faith as implies an assurance of God's love' and that 'no man can be justified and not know it'. (5) In the same year, Wesley wrote 'A confidence then (i.e. assurance of pardon) in a pardoning God is essential to saving faith.' (6)

Following a course of correspondence with 'John Smith' (which was a nom de plume of Dr. Thomas Secker (1693-1768), later Archbishop of Canterbury (7), Wesley changed his opinion. His modified thinking is contained in a letter to his brother Charles dated July 31, 1747. He now denies that 'justifying faith is a sense of pardon'. Indeed, it is 'contrary to reason' and 'flatly absurd'. Wesley admits that the Church of England did teach what he now denies, but he concludes that Scripture teaches otherwise, and that 'All men may err.' (8) By this time, therefore, Wesley's view of the distinction between faith and assurance coincided with Owen's, although there were still some important differences between them. The chief areas of difference have to do with the nature of justifying faith, and the relationship between faith and good works.

As we have already seen, Owen rejects the view that assurance of salvation is an ingredient of saving faith. He also rejects the

(4) Homilies, p.397. See also Appeal I, p.23.

(5) Works, Vol. 8, p.265.

(6) Appeal I, p.24.

(7) Works, Vol. 12, p.53. For Secker, see Carpenter, Cantuar: The Archbishops and their office (1971) and Downey, The Eighteenth Century Pulpit (1969).

(8) Ibid, p.105f.

idea that saving faith is a mere assent of the mind, or a historical factual faith - a simple acknowledgement of the truths of credal formulations. Furthermore, Owen is at pains to show that in asserting the Pauline view that we are justified by faith alone (Romans 3:28), he is not advocating some 'naked' faith. Anticipating the Roman objection that justification by faith alone leads to a careless disregard for holiness of life, Owen is quick to insist that

We are justified by faith alone; but we are not justified by that faith which can be alone. Alone, respects its influence into our justification, not its nature and existence. And we absolutely deny that we can be justified by that faith which can be alone; that is without a principle of spiritual life and universal obedience, operative in all the works of it, as duty doth require ....Yea, we allow no faith to be justifying, or to be of the same kind with it, which is not itself, and in its own nature, a spiritually vital principle of obedience and good works. (9)

What then is the precise nature of this true, saving faith?

It clearly involves both the head and the heart, as far as its psychological character is concerned, according to Owen's definition:

The nature of justifying faith, with respect unto that exercise of it whereby we are justified, consisteth of the heart's approbation of the way of justification and salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ proposed in the Gospel.... (10)

When Owen insists that they are not sincere believers that do not 'believe with the heart unto righteousness' he is clearly concerned to avoid defining faith in merely notional terms. Yet he makes it equally clear that

The assent of the mind....is the root of faith, the foundation of all that the soul doth in believing; ....But yet,

(9) JF, p.73.

(10) Ibid, p.93. See also p.81, 'believing is an act of the heart....'

consider it abstractedly, as a mere act of the mind, the essence and nature of justifying faith doth not consist solely therein, though it cannot be without it. (11)

In other words, the basic psychological constituents of true faith are mental assent to the truth that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself' and trust or confidence - the approbation of the heart. Of this trust, Owen says that it is 'inseparable' from that faith which comprises 'firm assent and persuasion'. Such is the faith which, it is argued, is a 'spiritually vital principle of obedience and good works'.

Owen is clearly very concerned to demonstrate that the faith which justifies a believer before God is not a 'dead, inactive, unfruitful' disposition. However, he rejects the view that obedience is included in the nature of faith:

Others plead for obedience, charity, the love of God, to be included in the nature of faith....Only we say, it is not any other grace, as charity and the like, nor any obedience, that gives life and form unto this faith; but it is this faith that gives life and efficacy unto all other graces, and form unto all evangelical obedience. (12)

In stating his position thus, Owen is attempting to avoid two extremes. He is rejecting the antinomian view which denies the necessity of good works, and also the Roman view of justification by faith and works. So confident is Owen that his via media is in accord with the New Testament consensus that he concludes:

So when they can give us any testimony of Scripture assigning our justification unto any other grace, or all

(11) Ibid, p.100.

(12) Ibid, p.103.

graces together, or all the fruits of them, so as it is assigned unto faith, they shall be attended unto. (13)

John Wesley's conception of faith underwent several significant changes throughout his career. The historical circumstances of this process have been outlined already. During the early, strictly 'Lutheran' phase, Wesley asserted in 1742 that 'a true and living faith....does not shut out repentance, hope and love, which are joined with faith in every man that is justified. But it shuts them out from the office of justifying....' (14) This statement is almost a verbatim quotation from the Homily on Salvation (15), in which faith is defined in simple terms, distinct from the other 'graces'.

During the mid 1740's, Wesley became acquainted with Baxter's Aphorismes. Corresponding with a shift in his view of justification came an alteration in his view of the nature of faith. At the 1744 Conference, it was stated, that 'love and obedience' were the 'inseparable properties of faith'. (16) In the following year, Wesley 'spelt out' what he meant by 'faith'. 'But I say, you have not true faith, unless your faith 'worketh by love'....' (17) This statement reveals the influence of Paul's expression in Galatians 5:6 'faith which worketh by love', described by Outler as 'one of Wesley's favourite texts'. (18) True faith is, by its very nature, a loving and obedient grace. Wesley would not mean to imply, in any

(13) Ibid, p.105.

(14) Principles of a Methodist, Works, Vol. 8, p.347. See also Appeal II, p.53.

(15) Op. cit., p.27.

(16) Works, Vol. 8, p.266. The period June - December, 1744, was obviously a transitional phase for Wesley. He still tended towards a 'Lutheran' conception of faith in his Farther Appeal. (Appeal II, pp.67-68.)

(17) DA II, p.269. See also Appeal II, p.65.

(18) Op. cit., p.221.

sense, a weakening of the doctrine of justification by faith only; all he is doing is 'expounding' what he believes to be the Pauline conception of faith. This is confirmed by his comment upon Galatians 5:6, as seen in his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament (1754):

....But faith - Alone; even that faith which worketh by love - All inward and outward holiness. (19)

It is obvious that Wesley's conception of faith now embraced obedience - it is no longer mere assent and trust. Obedience is also involved. By 1779, Wesley was even more explicit on this point.

For seeing no faith avails, but that 'which worketh by love', which produces both inward and outward good works, to affirm, No man is finally saved without this, is, in effect, to affirm, No man is finally saved without works. (20)

Wesley believed that this was the 'sound' biblical sense of the expression 'salvation by works'. As late as 1789, he was still exercised by this question. In his view, those only were 'accepted of God' who believe in Christ 'with a loving, obedient heart'. (21) He is careful to deny, in the commonly understood sense, that this amounts to 'salvation by works' since such an obedient faith, whilst a condition of salvation, is not to be viewed meritoriously. However, Wesley evidently defined faith as a comprehensive grace including the three ingredients of assent, trust and obedience. In his early definition, love and obedience were joined with faith. In his mature

(19) Notes, Galatians 5:6.

(20) Thoughts on Salvation by Faith, Works, Vol. 11, p.474.

(21) Works, Vol. 8, p.324.

view, love and obedience were ingredients of faith; they are essential to its correct definition.

Even when Owen asserts that 'justifying faith' is never without 'a sincere purpose of heart to obey God in all things'(22), he is not saying the same thing as Wesley. For Owen is saying that 'obedience' is distinct from faith, whereas Wesley is making it an ingredient of faith. Faith is therefore more than 'assent' and 'trust'; it includes also 'love' and 'obedience'.

Wesley obviously came to feel that the New Testament conception of faith is complex rather than simple. Yet, however much he is prepared to attribute to the nature of faith, he is still prepared to proclaim a gospel of salvation by faith alone. At the Methodist Conference of 1746, Wesley and his companions were beginning to wonder whether the disputes about faith and works were 'mere strife of words'. The conference's verdict on the points at issue reveals Wesley's comprehensive conception of faith:

In asserting salvation by faith, we mean this:  
(1) That pardon (salvation begun) is received by faith producing works. (2) That holiness (salvation continued) is faith working by love. (3) That heaven (salvation finished) is the reward of this faith. (23)

The picture is clear: 'salvation by faith' does not mean 'salvation by mere assent and trust'. Despite any variations of emphasis throughout the years, we find Wesley's commitment to an

(22) JE, p.103.

(23) Works, Vol. 8, p.279.

all-embracing conception of salvation by grace alone to be a constant one. In his sermon On the Wedding Garment (1790), he states with characteristic clarity:

It is through his (i.e. Christ's) merits alone that all believers are saved; that is, justified - saved from the guilt, sanctified - saved from the nature, of sin; and glorified - taken into heaven. (24)

The differences between Owen and Wesley cannot be explained merely in terms of emphasis. It is true, Owen's great preoccupation was with the defence of the doctrine of justification by faith only, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, whereas Wesley's emphasis was due to the abuse of such doctrines. Bernard Semmel writes that for Wesley, 'As always, Antinomianism was the great enemy.' (25) There can be no denying that Owen was, in very explicit terms, opposed to antinomianism also, but the generations of Dissenters following his death (1683) provided Wesley with evidence to suggest that Owen's view of faith, quite apart from his Calvinism, discouraged holiness of life. Such was the environment which helped to produce Wesley's two dialogues on the subject of antinomianism.

Owen and Wesley therefore entertained very different conceptions of faith. However, although Owen denied that obedience is included in faith, yet he is prepared to say (with just a hint of contradiction?), that true faith 'virtually and radically contains

(24) Works, Vol. 7, p.299.

(25) Op. cit., p.51.

in it universal obedience, as the effect is in the cause, the fruit in the root....' (26) For Wesley, 'love and obedience' are the 'inseparable properties' of faith - its defining attributes. In short, true faith is trusting obedience from the outset, and the prelude to all subsequent obedience. For Owen, true faith is causally related to obedience; they are not to be identified. Although this faith is in itself the radical principle of all obedience, '...no other grace, duty or work, can be associated with it' where justification is concerned (27). The difference can therefore be reduced to this: Owen insists that 'faith gives life and efficacy unto all other graces', whereas Wesley is saying that the graces of love and obedience give 'life and form' to faith.

It is now possible to answer questions posed earlier. Which version of sola fide did Owen employ, and what did Wesley's apparent rejection of it imply? It is plain that Owen assumed a psychological definition of 'faith only', i.e. faith to the exclusion of love, obedience, etc. Wesley shared this view early in his career, rejecting it during the mid 1740's. Thereafter he maintained a different conception, i.e. 'faith only' was a synecdochal expression meaning 'faith in Christ's merits only'. This is evident in Wesley's quotation from the Homily on Salvation, 'The true meaning of this saying 'We be justified by faith only', is this: 'We be justified by

(26) Owen, op. cit., p.73.

(27) Ibid, p.291.



the merits of Christ only, and not of our own works.' (28) Such faith is, by definition, a loving and obedient disposition - a complex, rather than a simple grace.

Owen would argue that Wesley had forsaken the doctrine of justification by faith only, but Wesley would deny this, arguing that Owen's conception of faith is biblically inadequate. Wesley would also argue that his version of sola fide provides a better guarantee of holiness than Owen's does.

Baxter was undoubtedly the source of Wesley's altered conception of faith. In his Aphorismes, he argued that justifying faith included obedience. 'As the accepting of Christ for Lord....is as essential a part of justifying faith as the accepting Him for our Saviour, so consequently sincere obedience....hath as much to do in justifying us before God as affiance.' (29) In other places, Baxter argues his case according to the received understanding of Christ's three-fold office of prophet, priest and king. 'And the very nature of faith is to take Christ as Christ, as he is offered in the Gospel: as our teacher to guide us in the way of holiness, and as our king to rule us, as well as a sacrifice for our sins...' (30) 'The object of justifying, saving faith, is one only undivided Christ....' (31) 'There is no justification by a partial faith.' (32) 'To accept Christ without affection and love, is not justifying faith.'

(28) Appeal II, p.53.

(29) Op. cit., pp.69,72.

(30) Treatise on Conversion, op. cit., p.421.

(31) Directions to a Sound Conversion, op. cit., p.592.

(32) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.86.

Nor does love follow as a fruit, but immediately concurs; for faith is the receiving of Christ with the whole soul....Faith accepts him for Saviour and Lord: for in both relations will he be received, or not at all. Faith not only acknowledges his sufferings and accepts of pardon and glory, but acknowledges his sovereignty, and submits to his government and way of salvation.' (33) What Baxter says of love, he also says of obedience. 'To believe in Christ at first is an act of obedience to God, who commandeth us so to do....it is but subjection to Christ, which that act includeth, that is, taking him for our Lord and Saviour to be obeyed....' (34)

Baxter's discussion of faith suggests yet another link with Calvin. Packer points out that Calvin 'was the first to display the unity of the work of Christ under the rubric of His threefold office, as prophet, priest and king....' Indeed, Packer stresses Calvin's originality in this respect. 'All the Reformers had insisted that I am saved, not by my own works, nor by what the Church does for me, but by Christ alone. But it was Calvin who first perceived that the best and most biblical way to make this point was to present Christ as prophet, teaching His people by His word and Spirit; priest, securing their salvation by His bloodshedding and intercession; and king, ruling not them only, but all creation for their sake; thus, by His threefold ministry, compassing

(33) Saints Everlasting Rest, op. cit., p.23.

(34) The Scripture Gospel Defended, (Bk. 1), p.46.

their whole salvation.' (35)

The threefold office formula became a basic feature of orthodox puritan christology, being enshrined in the Westminster Confession, Chapter VIII, 'Of Christ the Mediator'. Baxter was thus expounding his position within an accepted framework. However, his contribution in this area was to work out more thoroughly the full implications of the formula. His view simply amounts to saying that since faith is the subjective condition of the sinner's justification, each element in faith contributes to the fulfilment of the condition. Faith has a tripartite character: it involves the assent of the intellect, the trust of the heart and the consent or obedience of the will. 'Whenever justification and life is promised to faith, all these three are the essential parts of it.'

(36) It is therefore as an essential constituent of faith that obedience is necessary for justification. 'There is no justification by a partial faith.' (37) A partial faith, in Baxter's view, would involve defining faith in terms of either one or two of its elements, to the exclusion of the third. Each of the three elements corresponds with one of the offices of Christ. (38) To deny any one element of faith would negate that particular office, thus 'dividing' Christ as an object of the sinner's faith.

It has been shown that Owen views faith as comprising the

(35) Calvin the Theologian, in John Calvin, ed. Duffield (1966), p.168. For the history of the three-office idea before Calvin, see J. F. Jansen, Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ (1956), pp.23f.

(36) CT, Bk. 1, Part 2, p.45.

(37) Ibid, p.86.

(38) T. C. Johnson argues for this conception of faith in Saving Faith, EQ, July, 1931, pp.257-277.

assent of the mind and trust of the heart. He refuses to admit that obedience is itself a constituent of faith, even though he admits that faith contains the 'root' of obedience. The only way he can make good his case is to deny that Christ's kingly office is relevant to justifying faith. This is precisely what he does. 'Justifying faith....respecteth Christ in his priestly office alone....' (39) Since Owen does admit that faith includes the assent of the mind, ought he not to say that Christ's prophetic office is also relevant? How then does he exclude the third office, especially when he does concede that 'The consideration of the other offices is not excluded' though not 'formally comprised in the object of faith as justifying'? (40)

Owen seemingly solves the obvious dilemma facing him, by resorting to dubious aristotelian metaphysics, and not without a hint of contradiction. '....saving faith as it is described in general, do ever include obedience, not as its form or essence, but as the necessary effect is included in the cause, and the fruit in the fruit-bearing juice.' (41) Owen wants to establish a distinction between faith and acts of obedience, yet maintain a qualitative identity between an obedient disposition within faith, and subsequent acts of obedience. But this is all Baxter means when he asserts that 'actual obedience' is 'the fruit of faith' (42), precisely

(39) JF, p.117.

(40) Ibid, p.117.

(41) Ibid, p.122.

(42) Scripture Gospel Defended, p.46.

because faith includes an obediential disposition. To be consistent with his view that Christ's priestly office alone is relevant in justification, Owen must deny that even the root of obedience is included in faith. However, if he wishes to include it, then Christ's kingly office becomes relevant also. Only then can Owen avoid the charge that the sinner is 'justified by a part of faith'(43).

The fact remains that Owen implies a sinner may possess the privileges of pardon without the responsibility of repentance. He does of course, deny that this is so, but his view of faith suggests otherwise. Baxter is free of any inconsistency here. His view develops the logic of Calvin's three-office formula, by stressing the tripartite character of faith: it involves assent, trust and obedience. Acts of obedience result from true faith precisely because faith is an obedient grace from its initial exercise.

Later Reformed theologians have not agreed with Owen's view. R. L. Dabney insists that 'There is no real faith, no real coming to Christ, except that which embraces him in his three offices of prophet, priest and king.' (44) Dabney actually deplores Owen's view, comparing it with the more satisfactory statement in the Westminster Confession. He points out that, in his stress on the need for obedience, Owen was 'fortunately inconsistent'. Charles Hodge shared Dabney's view of the matter. 'As He is offered to us

(43) JF, p.122.

(44) A Phase of Religious Selfishness, in Discussions: Evangelical and Theological (1967 rep.), Vol. 1, pp.694-698.

as prophet, priest and king, as such He is accepted.' (45)

However, whilst Hodge also distances himself from Owen's view, he fails to see the implications of his position. He still maintains, like Owen, that 'The primary idea of faith is trust.' (46) The same is to be said of Thomas Chalmers, who otherwise approaches very closely to Baxter's position. (47) Packer criticised Baxter because he taught that faith was more than trust. But for reasons agreed with by Dabney and Hodge, concerning Christ's threefold office, Baxter argued that faith must be more than trust. Since the kingly office cannot be separated from the priestly office, obedience must be as much a constituent of faith as trust is. As trust necessarily presupposes assent, so it necessarily implies obedience. Faith is therefore an informed, trusting and obedient grace. In criticising Baxter's view of faith, Packer fails to see the full implications of the very formula he praises Calvin for expounding. It is not being said that Calvin himself taught as fully developed a conception of faith as that adopted by Baxter. However, from the evidence given in the previous chapter, he more than hinted at the idea. (48)

The merits of the various views being discussed depend ultimately on biblical exegesis. After all, they are the convictions of scholars claiming to be biblical theologians. The question therefore remains: what of the textual evidence? The Apostle Paul speaks of 'the

(45) Systematic Theology, Vol. 3, p.99.

(46) Ibid, p.43.

(47) See Institutes of Theology, Vol. 2, pp.152,160,178.

(48) Calvin also says 'that the name of Christ refers to those three offices', (Institutes, II:15:2) and 'faith embraces Christ as he is offered by the Father' (Ibid, III:2:8). Therefore, 'He unites the offices of King and Pastor towards believers, who voluntarily submit to him....' (Ibid, II:15:5). See also Berkhof, op. cit., pp.503-505.

obedience of faith' (hupakouo pisteos) in Romans 1:5 and 16:26, and in Romans 10:16, he treats belief or faith (pistis) and obedience (hupakoe) as virtually synonymous terms. In Romans 10:10, Paul speaks of belief from the heart, whereas earlier (6:17), he had spoken of obedience from the heart. Paul also describes faith as a 'working' as well as a 'trusting' grace in Galatians 5:6 and I Thessalonians 1:3. The Greek word for disobedience (apeitheia) is translated as unbelief ('he that believeth not') in John 3:36, and peithomai is translated as 'believed' - in the sense of being persuaded - in Acts 17:4. By stressing obedience, which embraces the will, as surely as trust involves the heart, and assent the mind, the New Testament writers clearly view faith as more than mere assent and trust. Indeed, Romans 6:17 embraces all three elements. 'But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.' There are, in fact, a number of instances of this usage in the New Testament, which neither Owen nor Wesley investigated. This is particularly surprising in the case of Owen, since he did thoroughly examine the Scriptural usage of 'justification' in both the Old and New Testaments in Chapter 4 of his treatise on Justification by Faith.

The Scriptural evidence would seem therefore to support

Wesley's view of faith. In short, rejection of Christ's lordship (Romans 6:11) in a disobedient life is sure evidence that he is not trusted as Saviour (Romans 5:1). This is confirmed with particular clarity by Archbishop Tillotson. As a contemporary of Tillotson, Owen may well have had him in mind when he wrote of those who 'earnestly pleaded' that obedience be included in faith (49). In a sermon not published in his lifetime, True Christianity Defended (1741), Wesley saw reason to criticise the Archbishop, who had already been dead 47 years, for arguing that 'not faith alone, but good works also, are necessary in order to justification' (50). It could be said that Wesley, in his relatively early zeal, did not entirely understand Tillotson's position. In later years, however, Wesley published a 'small specimen' of extracts from Tillotson's works, to demonstrate that 'the Archbishop was as far from being the worst, as from being the best, of the English writers' (51). In a sermon entitled Of the Christian Faith, which Sanctifies, Justifies and Saves, Tillotson demonstrates convincingly the view that 'obedience is included in the Scripture notion of faith':

Now that obedience of heart and life to the precepts and commands of the Gospel, as well as an assent of the understanding to the truth of the Gospel-Revelation, and a trusting and relying upon the merits of Christ, is included in the Scripture notion of faith, will evidently appear to any that will consider these texts. Romans 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the

(49) JF, p.103.

(50) Works, Vol. 7, p.433.

(51) Works, Vol. 14, p.223. For details, see p.91, note (386).



faith among all nations for his name; where the belief of the gospel is called the obedience of faith. Romans 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the Gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord who hath believed our report? But if faith do not include obedience, how could he prove that there were some that did not obey the Gospel, because Isaiah said, there were some that did not believe it? And so likewise by comparing I Timothy 4:10 where he is said to be the Saviour of them that believe, with Hebrews 5:9, where he is said to be the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. As also by comparing, Galatians 5:6 where it is said, For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision: but faith which worketh by love, with I Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing: but the keeping of the commandments of God. And so likewise by those texts, where unbelief and disobedience are equivalently used. I will but mention one, Hebrews 3:12. The Apostle, from the example of the Israelites, cautions Christians against unbelief, Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. And repeating the same caution in the next chapter, at the 11th verse, he varies the phrase a little, Lest any man fall after the same example of disobedience; the word is apeitheias, which indeed our translators render unbelief, but that confirms that which I bring it for, that disobedience and unbelief are the same. And so likewise we find faith and disobedience opposed frequently in Scripture. John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life. In the Greek it is, he that obeyeth not the Son, as you will see in the margin of the Bible. I Peter 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And this doth likewise appear in all those texts, wherein repentance, and our forgiving of others, and several other acts of obedience are made the conditions of our justification; or the omission of them sins, as well as faith. (52)

Does this type of exegesis demand the surrender of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith? Wesley might feel rather ambivalent, and Owen would probably say yes, yet Tillotson

(52) Till. II, p.475.

is quite adamant:

So that we cannot be said to be justified by faith alone, unless that faith include in it obedience. (53)

Tillotson says that he had 'insisted the longer upon this' since if the 'Scripture notion of faith in Christ' were 'well understood and considered',

....it would silence and put an end to those infinite controversies about faith and justification, which have so much troubled the Christian world, to the great prejudice of practical religion, and holiness of life. (54)

Not surprisingly, Tillotson also viewed justifying faith in the context of the triple-office formula:

So that he that believes the Lord Jesus, believes him to be the great guide and teacher sent from God....This is to believe his prophetical office. He believes that he is the author of salvation, and hath purchased for us forgiveness of sins, ransom from hell, ....and therefore that we ought to rely upon him only for salvation, to own him for our Saviour....This is to believe his priestly office. And lastly, he believes that the precepts of the Gospel, being delivered to us by the Son of God, ought to have the authority of laws upon us, and that we are bound to be obedient to them; ....and this is to believe the kingly office of Christ. And this is the sum of that which is meant by Faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, which the Apostle saith was one subject of his preaching. (55)

Although Wesley never seems to have expounded the triple-office formula, it implicitly undergirded his theology of faith. The following lines of Charles Wesley, whilst not his best poetry, reflect perfectly the views of his brother. The influence of the Baxter-Tillotson via media, Calvin's triple office formula and the

(53) Ibid, p.476.

(54) Ibid, p.476.

(55) The Necessity of Repentance and Faith, ibid, p.3.

Pauline text, Galatians 5:6, are easy to detect:

Partners of a glorious hope,  
Lift your hearts and voices up,  
Jointly let us rise, and sing  
Christ our Prophet, Priest and King;  
Monuments of Jesu's grace,  
Speak we by our lives his praise;  
Walk in him we have received,  
Show we not in vain believed.

Plead we thus for faith alone,  
Faith which by our works is shown:  
God it is who justifies;  
Only faith the grace applies:  
Active faith that lives within,  
Conquers earth, and hell, and sin,  
Sanctifies and makes us whole,  
Forms the Saviour in the soul.

Let us for this faith contend,  
Sure salvation is its end:  
Heaven already is begun,  
Everlasting life is won.  
Only let us persevere,  
Till we see our Lord appear,  
Never from the rock remove,  
Saved by faith, which works by love. (56)

Considering Wesley's modified conception of faith, there is a sense in which the words of Professor Semmel have as much significance for Wesley's views on faith and obedience as they do for his churchmanship: 'Wesley regarded himself as making real and vital the true message of the Anglican via media, the doctrine of.... Tillotson, rather than the false Calvinistic one of the dissenting sects.' (57) One may also add that Wesley is closer to Calvin, and thus, in a sense, more truly 'Calvinist', than Owen appears to be. Wesley would have agreed with Tillotson that there were 'worthy and

(56) MHB (1904), 743, v.1; 742, vs.3,4.

(57) Op. cit., p.188.

excellent divines' (like Owen) who, though they 'always pressed the necessity of holiness and obedience' (58), did so on principles more easily leaning towards antinomianism.

In his preface to The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, Owen is clearly aware of the objections which are likely to be made to his exposition of the subject:

I know that the doctrine here pleaded for is charged by many with an unfriendly aspect towards the necessity of personal holiness, good works, and all gospel obedience in general, yea, utterly to take it away. (59)

That there was nothing new in this, Owen is quick to point out. The Apostle Paul was aware of the objection in his epistle to the Romans, and the Roman Church made the same charge against the teaching of the Protestant reformers. Owen is candid enough to admit that, in his own day, 'there is a horrible decay in true gospel purity and holiness of life amongst the generality of men.' (60) He himself concedes that the doctrine he is concerned to expound is liable to abuse, and he is willing that his view 'be exploded' if it cannot be demonstrated that it possesses a 'useful tendency unto the promotion of godliness'. (61)

Whilst Owen is at pains clearly <sup>to</sup> distinguish between justification and sanctification, and to point out that the former is used in Scripture forensically (without any immediate reference to the subjective realisation of grace), he does nonetheless, insist

(58) Till. II, p.485.

(59) JF, p.4.

(60) Ibid, p.5.

(61) Ibid, p.5.

on the importance of holiness:

That God doth require in and by the gospel a sincere obedience of all that do believe, to be performed in and by their own persons, though through the aids of grace supplied unto them by Jesus Christ. He requireth, indeed, obedience, duties, and works of righteousness, in and of all persons whatever. (62)

John Wesley was equally aware of the need to rescue the doctrine of justification by faith from the misconceptions of its critics, even during his 'Lutheran' phase, and as Luther himself did. In his sermon Salvation by Faith (1738), Wesley says:

The usual objection to this is, ....That to preach salvation, or justification by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: 'It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but productive of all good works, and all holiness.' (63)

Both Owen and Wesley agreed with the position of the Reformers, that 'good works' are the evidence of a 'true and lively faith' (see Article XII of the Church of England, 'Of Good Works') (64). Notwithstanding that a person is 'freely justified by the grace of God', Owen grants that through personal righteousness, 'that faith whereby we are justified is evidenced, proved, manifested, in the sight of God and men.' (65) Likewise Wesley insists in his Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion (1744), 'that true, justifying faith may be as evidently known as a tree may be known by the fruit.' (66)

Throughout the respective lives and ministries of Owen and

(62) Ibid, p.154.

(63) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 5, pp.9-10.

(64) The Savoy Declaration, to which Owen would have subscribed, makes the same observation: 'Good works....are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith.' (Chapter XVI, sec. ii)

(65) JF, p.159.

(66) Appeal II, p.52.

Wesley, the precise relationship between justification and sanctification, between faith and good works, was always a matter of controversy. In Owen's case, this is illustrated in connection with his work Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (1657). In 1674, the rector of St. George's, Botolph Lane, London, William Sherlock (67) (later 'Master of the Temple and Chaplain-in-ordinary to His Majesty'), published a critique of Owen's work entitled A Discourse concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ.... In addition to accusing Owen of holding to a mystical rather than scriptural knowledge of Christ, Sherlock took exception to Owen's remarks on the 'necessity of good works' (68). In the passage in question, Owen raises a theoretical objection to the view that all practical impediments to the believer's communion with God have been completely removed by Christ, and that no outstanding obligations remain to be fulfilled by the believer, as to the basis of such communion. In Owen's own words, the objection he poses is as follows:

If the obedience of the life of Christ be imputed unto us, and that is our righteousness before God, then what need we yield any obedience ourselves? (69)

In reply to this objection, Owen unconvincingly refers to the words of the Apostle Paul, Ephesians 2:8-10, insisting that it is there intimated:

An assertion of the necessity of good works, notwithstanding that we are not saved by them; and that is, that God has ordained that we should walk in them: which is a sufficient ground of our obedience, whatever be the use of it. (70)

(67) Sherlock (1641-1707), was the father of Dr. Thomas Sherlock (1678-1761), Bishop of London, and author of several works against Deism. See DNB.

(68) Sherlock, op. cit., p.126; Owen, see Works, Vol. 2, pp.180,314.

(69) Ibid, p.176.

(70) Ibid, p.315.

It was Owen's use of the phrase, 'the necessity of good works' which aroused Sherlock's suspicions. In fact, he wonders why good works are necessary at all, if salvation is possible without them. It is at this point that Owen's argument is not altogether convincing. One hesitates to suggest that he is evasive, yet his possibly over-tenacious adherence to his theory of imputation seems to have a detrimental influence on his polemical agility. Since the book in question was a practical rather than polemical piece of writing, Owen declined to deal thoroughly with the question of the necessity of good works, on the grounds that the reasons for their necessity 'are so many, and lie so deep in the mystery of the gospel and dispensation of grace' and that they 'spread themselves so throughout the whole revelation of the will of God unto us' (71). One is tempted to ask, 'Is it so difficult to provide a truly biblical answer to such an important question?' However, in supplying some 'brief heads' of 'what might at large be insisted on', Owen gives an answer which is far removed from brevity, even by seventeenth century standards. His position may be summarised as follows:

Good works are necessary because:

1. God has commanded them.
2. God's gracious purpose is that we should be holy.
3. God is glorified through them.
4. The honour, welfare and usefulness of God's people in the world are promoted by them.

(71) Ibid, p.315. Chapter XVI of The Savoy Declaration provides a relatively concise statement on good works, which Owen might have employed, although the necessity of good works is not really emphasised.

5. Believers are to be sanctified.
6. They promote holiness, which is the means, or 'the way' of obtaining eternal life.
7. They provide signs or evidence of grace.
8. They are the means whereby believers express their gratitude to God for salvation. (72)

Many of Owen's answers still beg the question 'Why are good works necessary, if Christ's obedience, rather than our own, is the ground of our acceptance?' One may still ask, why has God commanded them? Why has he purposed that we be holy? Why is sanctification important? Many of the reasons Owen provides state the consequences of being holy, rather than the necessity of holiness, viz, God is glorified as a result of holiness, the church is more effective in the world by it, holiness is an evidence of grace, and it is a means of expressing the church's gratitude to God for salvation.

Owen's reasons obviously failed to satisfy Sherlock, who parodied Owen's position by suggesting that since Christ's righteousness imputed is the sole basis of the sinner's justification, then 'God hath left it indifferent whether we obey him or no' and that he will not 'damn men if they do not obey his commands for holiness'. Therefore, any good works of our own are not necessary, in any sense, for salvation. In his reply to Sherlock, published the same year (1674), Owen sums up his view in a rare example of genuine brevity:

(72) Ibid, pp.315-320.



We are neither justified nor saved without them, though we are not justified by them, nor saved for them. (73)

It is arguable that Owen feels some degree of embarrassment over this whole subject, and this statement possesses more than a hint of contradiction. He is clearly anxious to avoid any suggestion that the righteousness of Christ is insufficient, and equally the antinomian extreme which denies any place or importance to the righteousness of the believer. On one hand, Owen insists that men will be damned if they disobey God's commands for holiness, and, on the other, he is equally insistent that in no way is such obedience a basis for justification. That this seems to be his settled view is reflected in his Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit, also published in 1674:

It must be granted, therefore, that the end of gospel commands, requiring the obedience of holiness in us, is not that hereby or thereon we should be justified. God hath therein provided another righteousness for that end....Now, this is no other but the righteousness of Christ imputed unto us.... (74)

What meaning can therefore be attached to Owen's admission, that 'we are neither justified nor saved without' good works? Can Owen write like this, yet still deny that good works are, in a sense, conditions of salvation, and even justification? Why then was he apparently unwilling to specifically 'spell it out' in these terms? In his comment on Hebrews 12:14 '...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' (a key biblical statement in this entire

(73) A Vindication of some passages in a Discourse concerning Communion with God (1674), in Works, Vol. 2, p.321.

(74) HS, p.609.

discussion), Owen's thoughts are not without some degree of nervous qualification:

Now this future sight of the Lord doth depend peremptorily on our present holiness. It doth not do so as the meritorious cause of it; for be we ever so holy, yet in respect of God we are 'unprofitable servants', and 'eternal life is the gift of God by Jesus Christ'. (75)

It still must be asked therefore, what is the precise role of good works or holiness in 'qualifying' the believer for the beatific sight of a reconciled God, or 'the enjoyment of the celestial happiness'? (76) Since God has provided the active righteousness of Christ for the sinner's justification, what necessity is there for any supplementary holiness?

These queries, together with the controversy with Sherlock, naturally lead us back to Owen's Justification by Faith, published three years after the reply to Sherlock, in 1677. In chapter 6, Owen again considers 'Evangelical personal righteousness, the nature and use of it.' (77) After having rejected the idea of a two-fold justification, and also the view that good works are a condition of justification - matters which will be discussed in due course - Owen states his view on the place of obedience in the judgement of the believer at 'the last day':

That upon it we shall be declared righteous at the last day, and without it none shall so be....a man that professeth evangelical faith, or faith in Christ, shall be tried, judged, and whereon, as such, he shall be justified, we grant that it is, and must be, by his own personal sincere obedience. (78)

(75) Works, Vol. 24, p.287. In the course of his exposition, Owen refers the reader to his treatise on the Holy Spirit for his views on holiness, and how it differs from morality.

(76) John Brown, An Exposition of Hebrews (1862), p.637.

(77) JF, p.152.

(78) Ibid, pp.159-160. See the discussion of this passage by Monk, op. cit., p.128.

This statement raises a number of questions. Why does Owen cautiously avoid the term 'justification', employing the alternative, synonymous phrase 'declared righteous'? Is he not, in fact, suggesting that, in the final and ultimate sense, obedience is just as essential for justification as the righteousness of Christ is? Is he not therefore involved in a basic contradiction in asserting, as we have noted earlier, 'that we are not justified by' our obedience, whereas he is now insisting that a believer will be justified at the last day 'by his own personal sincere obedience'?

Owen would deny the charge of self-contradiction, on the grounds of the 'true state of the question'. (79) His approach to the question at issue has depended on drawing the distinction between the status of a sinner on one hand, and that of a professed believer, as such, on the other. As regards the former, Owen argues that 'a sinner, guilty of death, and obnoxious unto the curse, shall be pardoned, acquitted, and justified....by the righteousness of Christ alone imputed unto him' (80), whereas a believer, judged as such, is 'declared righteous' by his own obedience. Owen assumes that the justification of such a person, judged as a sinner, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, has already taken place 'at once....through faith in the blood of Christ' (81). In short, Owen's position seems to assume a dual-order

(79) Ibid, p.152.

(80) Ibid, p.160.

(81) Ibid, p.152.

scheme of justification:

- (a) Sinners (as such) are justified by Christ's righteousness imputed to them.
- (b) Believers (as justified sinners) are 'declared righteous' by their own obedience.

Only by assuming this distinction can Owen avoid the charge of self-contradiction, a fact which faces him with a further difficulty. One is inclined to say that this distinction is highly artificial, and every bit as arbitrary as that of a two-fold justification, which Owen explicitly rejects as 'without scripture ground' (82). Indeed, it is arguable that there is more scriptural warrant for the distinction Owen rejects than for the one he tacitly assumes. In other words, Owen's view is questionable for the following reason. Since a sinner must become a believer, are not God's requirements of the believer also relevant to him, as a sinner? Is not the gospel concerned with the justification of men, regarded as sinners, yet called upon to believe 'unto holiness'. The inescapable conclusion is that, in Owen's view, both the righteousness of Christ imputed, and the personal obedience of the believer are absolutely necessary for justification and salvation. Owen obviously finds difficulty in being as explicit as this, from an apparent inability to reconcile the roles of Christ's righteousness and the believer's own inherent holiness, in the process of

(82) Ibid, p.142.

justification. Had he restricted his concept of imputation to Christ's passive righteousness in the manner of Calvin, Piscator and Wesley, and also our middle-way theologians, then his problem would have been solved. His only other alternative was to deny the necessity of good works completely, a course which he would not contemplate.

It has already been noted that Wesley's later definition of faith was different from Owen's. Unlike the Puritan divine, Wesley came to regard obedience as an essential ingredient of faith; not only is true faith never without obedience, but obedience is an inseparable property of faith, one of its defining attributes (83). In expressing himself in this manner, Wesley is clearly concerned to deal with the issue of antinomianism at the root. Consistent with this concern, the theme of good works was a prominent feature of Wesley's preaching. He was often accused by Churchmen of despising good works in the interests of asserting salvation by faith, and of over-emphasising the necessity of works at the expense of Christ's righteousness by Dissenters. Wesley's writings supply an abundance of evidence to show how important this matter was in his view of the gospel, and how frequently he had to clear himself from the misconceptions of others.

In his Answer to the Revd. Mr. Church (1745), Wesley, like

(83) Works, Vol. 8, p.266.

Owen, makes a clear distinction between justification and salvation:

Good works, properly so called, cannot be the conditions of justification....And yet, notwithstanding, good works may be, and are, conditions of final salvation. (84)

Doubtless Owen would feel somewhat ambivalent about the second half of Wesley's statement. He himself conceded that none are 'saved without good works', whilst denying that we are 'saved for them'. Statements such as Wesley made led many Calvinists to regard Wesley as an enemy of Christ's righteousness, a charge which he met with his sermon The Lord our Righteousness (1765). To the surprise of his critics, Wesley quotes approvingly from John Calvin to dispel any suspicions over his position, and to affirm that he believed that 'Christ, by his obedience, procured or purchased righteousness for us.' (Calvin) (85) Consistent with Calvin's 'Calvinism' at this point, Wesley is ready to meet the implied accusation 'But do not you believe inherent righteousness?'

Yes, in its proper place; not as the ground of our acceptance with God, but as the fruit of it; not in the place of imputed righteousness, but as consequent upon it. That is, I believe God implants righteousness in everyone to whom he has imputed it. (86)

The argument gains in momentum, developing to the point where even the degree of hesitation in the 1745 statement (good works may be, and are, conditions....) completely evaporates. Imputed righteousness (or pardon) is evidently not enough:

O warn them....against 'continuing in sin that grace may abound!' Warn them against making 'Christ the minister

(84) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 8, p.374.

(85) Wesley actually supplies three quotations from Calvin's Institutes, II:17.

(86) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 5, p.230.

of sin;' against making void that solemn decree of God, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' by a vain imagination of being holy in Christ! O warn them, that if they remain unrighteous, the righteousness of Christ will profit them nothing! (87)

There can be no doubt over the validity of Wesley's emphasis. Quite apart from his affinity with Calvin, he constantly was appealing to Scripture in asserting the necessity of holiness. Yet he found much heated opposition to his views, not least from Dr. John Gill, the hyper-Calvinist Baptist theologian (1697-1771), whose antipathy towards Arminianism is well known. It is arguable that Owen's carefully - and not altogether successfully - qualified exposition of this matter provided too easy an excuse for his successors to minimise the importance of holiness. Gill's comments provide an instance of the suppression of clear scriptural data in the interests of theological deduction, to the point where he says, 'I cannot say that good works are necessary to salvation, that is to obtain it, which is the only sense in which they can be said with any propriety to be necessary to it....which I charge as a Popish and Socinian tenet, and I hope I shall ever oppose, as long as I have a tongue to speak, or a pen to write with, and am capable of using either.' (88) It was in an atmosphere created by this kind of thinking that John Wesley wrote to Mrs. Elizabeth Bennis in 1774:

(87) Ibid, p.230. Calvin's actual position has already been outlined, viz, imputed righteousness is the same thing as pardon, and pardon is necessarily accompanied, as its subjective correlate, by sanctification or 'inherent righteousness'.

(88) The Necessity of Good Works unto Salvation Considered (1738), in Sermons and Tracts, Vol. 2, p.185, (1773).

None of us talk of being accepted for our works: that is the Calvinist slander. But we all maintain, we are not saved without works; that works are a condition (though not the meritorious cause) of final salvation. It is by faith in the righteousness and blood of Christ that we are enabled to do all good works; and it is for the sake of these that all who fear God and work righteousness are accepted of him. (89)

One notes, in this statement, indirect references to Hebrews 12:14 (...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord) and, more explicitly, Acts 10:35 (But in every nation, he that.... worketh righteousness, is accepted with him). When Wesley is accused of distorting scripture, he frequently defends his view by employing plain scriptural statements.

Even as late as 1777, Wesley felt the need to provide a sustained apologetic over the issue of good works. On November 23rd of that year, he preached on behalf of the Humane Society at Lewisham (90) from Matthew 25:34, a sermon entitled The Reward of the Righteous. Sensitive to the objections of his critics, Wesley observes that 'whenever the necessity of good works is strongly insisted on', it is taken for granted that 'he who speaks in this manner is but one remove from Popery' (91). Wesley clearly considers that the type of gospel preaching which emphasises grace to the exclusion of the fruits of grace has very largely lost the overall balance and emphasis of the New Testament. Even allowing for a strong element of hyperbole, Wesley judges it necessary to state his

(89) Letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Bennis, March 1st, 1774, in Works, Vol. 12, p.372.

(90) Journal, Works, Vol. 4, p.106.

(91) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 7, p.123.



case strongly:

Some....in order to exalt the value of faith, have utterly deprecated good works. They speak of them as not only not necessary to salvation, but as greatly obstructive to it. They represent them as abundantly more dangerous than evil ones, to those who are seeking to save their souls. One cries aloud, 'More people go to hell by praying, than by thieving.' Another screams out, 'Away with your works! Have done with your works, or you cannot come to Christ!' And this unscriptural, irrational, heathenish declamation is called preaching the Gospel! (92)

No one stressed more than Wesley did, that works before justification have no value in the sight of God, yet in referring to Titus 2:14 and Galatians 6:10, he possesses no inhibitions over the place of good works in the economy of grace and the work of Christ:

He died 'to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of' all 'good works'; ....And this is unquestionably included in St. Paul's exhortation: 'As we have time, let us do good unto all men;' good in every possible kind, as well as in every possible degree. (93)

Wesley goes so far as to conclude that the entire biblical revelation culminates in the restoration of sinful man, not merely to favour with God, but to 'goodness'. Good works are the 'perfection of religion'. With reference to I Corinthians 13, Wesley declares:

What St. Paul there describes as the highest of all Christian graces, is properly and directly the love of our neighbour. And to him who attentively considers the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament, it will be equally plain, that works springing from this love are the highest part of the religion therein revealed. (94)

(92) Ibid, p.123.

(93) Ibid, p.124.

(94) Ibid, p.124.

In the closing years of his life, Wesley was still concerned with a precise and accurate statement of the relationship between Christ's righteousness imputed, and the believer's inherent righteousness. In The Wedding Garment (1790), preached at Madeley only a year before his death, he offers a hopefully incontrovertible<sup>t</sup> synthesis:

The righteousness of Christ is doubtless necessary for any soul that enters into glory; but so is personal holiness too, for every child of man....The former is necessary to entitle us to heaven; the latter to qualify us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ we would have no claim to glory; without holiness we would have no fitness for it.  
(95)

Wesley's position becomes clearer: good works or holiness is a necessary, though non-meritorious condition of final salvation. The preaching of the gospel is thus more than the proclamation of forgiveness. Pardon and holiness are the essential and inseparable components of salvation. Despite frequent accusations of vacillation, Wesley insisted that, since his evangelical conversion in 1738, no 'material alteration' had occurred in his views. Although his conception of faith had changed in the 1740's, he argued that his main emphasis always arose from a concern to maintain the harmony of biblical emphases. Thus the venerable evangelist states his case:

I am now on the borders of the grave; but by the grace of God, I still witness the same confession. Indeed, some have supposed, that when I began to declare, 'By grace ye are saved through faith,' I retracted what I had before

(95) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 7, p.300.

maintained: 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' But it is an entire mistake: these scriptures well consist with each other; the meaning of the former being plainly this, - By faith we are saved from sin, and made holy. The imagination, that faith supercedes holiness, is the marrow of Antinomianism. (96)

At this stage, a more definite comparison between Owen and Wesley can be offered. That we are 'not saved without works' is maintained by both men. Unlike Owen, Wesley further insists that good works are conditions of final salvation, if not of initial justification. This view enables Wesley to avoid the kind of contradiction Owen is committed to, when the latter argues on one hand that 'we are not justified by our obedience', yet, on the other a believer will 'be justified at the last day 'by his own personal, sincere obedience'.

Despite Wesley's timely and scriptural polemic against antinomianism, he prejudiced his case by insisting on his doctrine of perfection. For him, this was the only way to counter the incipient antinomianism evident in the teaching of John Owen. As for the 'middle-way' theologians, the error already highlighted in Baxter's formulation of the doctrine of justification, does not invalidate his stress on holiness:

My opinion is that it's essential to justifying faith to take Christ as Lord and Saviour; and that they who say, 'but not qua justifying', do imply false doctrine, as I have elsewhere discovered: I think that holiness is of the essence of Christianity; and if I were sure a man were unholy, I would not call him a Christian. (97)

(96) Ibid, p.303.

(97) Confession, p.xxxi.

Tillotson likewise argues:

But tho' works of righteousness were not necessary before their justification, yet they are necessary afterwards, because the faith of the Gospel, and the embracing of Christianity doth imply a stipulation and engagement on our part, to live according to the laws and rules of the Gospel, which do strictly enjoin all kind of virtue and goodness. (98)

Although Tillotson unequivocally rejects the possibility of 'perfect obedience' in this life, i.e. pardon of sin will be a constant requirement, he insists that it must be 'sincere obedience' (99). In this way, the 'errors of Popery' and the 'luscious doctrines of the antinomians' are avoided. Accordingly, Tillotson refuses to grant either that his position makes concessions to Roman Catholicism or that it denies salvation by grace:

The doctrine of our Church, both in the Articles and Homilies of it, hath been preserved pure and free from all error and corruption in this matter on either hand, asserting the necessity of good works, and yet renouncing the merit of them in that arrogant sense, in which the Church of Rome does teach and assert it; and so teaching Justification by Faith, and the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, as to maintain the indispensable necessity of the virtues of a good life. (100)

This is a statement which, for all their differences, neither Owen nor Wesley could dissent from.

(98) Of the Necessity of Good Works, Till. II, p.346.

(99) Christ the Author, and Obedience the Condition of Salvation, Till. I, p.501.

(100) Of the Necessity of Good Works, Till. II, p.359.

4: The Theory of a two-fold Justification.

Notwithstanding his unequivocal assertion of the necessity of good works, it has been shown that Owen is compelled to resort to some version of dualism with regard to his theory of justification. Without this, his argument for the necessity of good works lacks cogency. However, as a Reformed theologian, Owen is committed to the view that 'evangelical justification is but one, and is at once completed' (1). Whilst it would be absurd to question John Wesley's protestantism (2), Owen would be concerned to point out that even Wesley's sparing and cautious acquiescence in the two-fold justification theory has its roots in Roman theology.

Those of the Roman church do ground their whole doctrine of justification upon a distinction of a double justification; which they call the first and the second. (3)

Owen outlines this view when he says that, by 'the first justification', the Roman theologians mean an 'infusion' or 'communication unto us of an inherent principle or habit of grace or charity' (4), and the 'second justification' is an effect or consequent hereof; and the proper formal cause thereof is good works, proceeding from this principle of grace and love' (5). Owen admits that the dualistic theory arises from 'the seeming repugnancy' between the teachings of the apostles Paul and James, but his chief

(1) JF, p.137.

(2) See Wesley's anti-Roman treatises in Works, Vol. 10.

(3) JF, p.137.

(4) Ibid, p.137.

(5) Ibid, p.138.

objection to the Roman version of this dualism arises from its failure to see the fundamental distinction between justification and sanctification:

Justification through the free grace of God, by faith in the blood of Christ, is evacuated by it. Sanctification is turned into a justification, and corrupted by making the fruits of it meritorious. (6)

Owen's rejection of a two-fold justification is clear. He thought it 'unscriptural and irrational' (7). Wesley, however, does not share Owen's inhibitions. He sees no threat to the righteousness of Christ, i.e. his passive righteousness, in asserting what even Owen is forced to admit, viz, the justification of a professed believer by 'his own personal sincere obedience'.

In the 1740's, Wesley was unambiguous about the danger of confusing justification with sanctification. In answer to the question, 'But what is it to be justified?', he replies that 'it is not the being made actually just and righteous':

....This is sanctification; which is, indeed, in some degree, the immediate fruit of justification, but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. (8)

This is consistent with Wesley's strictly 'Lutheran' period. He clearly avoids the central charge Owen brings against the Roman view. Owen does not suggest that a dualistic view necessarily commits one to the Roman theory in all its aspects, but he does

(6) Ibid, p.138.

(7) Ibid, p.139.

(8) Sermon on Justification by Faith (1746), Works, Vol. 5, p.51.

insist that, in some sense, dualism 'must be allowed' by all 'that hold our inherent righteousness to be the cause of, or to have any influence unto, our justification before God' (9). Whilst Owen paradoxically concedes what he 'officially' rejects, Wesley did not disguise his growing disaffection for what he believed was an anti-nomian view of justification. During the transitional period after 1745, there was less of a dependence on some aspects of the Reformed Anglican position. Wesley often vindicated his teaching in his early ministry by appealing to the Book of Homilies. They emphatically deny that we are 'to count ourselves to be justified by some act or virtue that is within ourselves' (10). However, we have seen that Wesley modified his position, by adopting a supplementary concept of justification, at variance with the strict Reformation idea that 'pardon' and 'justification' were synonymous. This change of view was occasioned by his acquaintance with Baxter's Aphorismes (11). It is very likely, that when Owen stated that others besides Roman theologians, had 'embraced' a dualistic view, he had Baxter, and even Tillotson in mind, both of whom subscribed to the view that 'our own inherent righteousness' has some 'influence unto our justification before God'.

As we have seen Wesley admits that the Reformed doctrine of the Church of England means by the term 'justification' 'present

(9) JF, p.138.

(10) A Sermon of the Salvation of Mankind...., Certain Sermons or Homilies appointed to be read in Churches, (1822 ed.), p.31.

(11) See Minutes of some late conversations, Works, Vol. 8, p.271, and a more detailed outline in Part 1, supra, pp.90f.

pardon and acceptance with God' (12). At the same time, he also admits that 'Justification sometimes means our acquittal at the last day.' (13) and that 'both inward and outward holiness are the stated conditions of final justification' (14). In Justification by Faith (1746), Wesley observes that, in the writings of the Apostle Paul, 'the plain, scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins' (15), though not exclusively so:

Indeed, the Apostle in one place (Romans 2:13) seems to extend the meaning of the word much farther, where he says, 'Not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified.' Here he appears to refer our justification to the sentence of the great day. And so our Lord himself unquestionably doth, when he says, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified;' proving thereby, that 'for every idle word men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgement. (16)

One of the fiercest critics Wesley had to face was the Revd. Rowland Hill, M.A. (1744-1833). In 1772, Hill's Review of all the doctrines taught by Mr. John Wesley appeared, in which the author attempted to expose Wesley's numerous (alleged) contradictions. In the same year, six months later, Wesley replied (17), and, under heading VI, defends his position with regard to a two-fold justification. Hill had cited Wesley as saying that 'the justification spoken of by St. Paul to the Romans, and in our articles, is

(12) Answer to the Revd. Mr. Church (1745), Works, Vol. 8, p.372. In this sense of 'justification', Wesley, like the Reformers -and Calvin in particular - considered justification to be repeatable. See The First Fruits of the Spirit, Works, Vol. 5, p.88.

(13) Ibid, p.372.

(14) Ibid, p.373.

(15) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 5, p.52.

(16) Ibid, pp.52-53.

(17) Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's 'Review of all the Doctrines Taught by Mr. John Wesley' (1772), in Works, Vol. 10, p.360f.



one and no more', whilst quoting elsewhere -- apparently with approval - the views of John Fletcher of Madeley (1729-1789) (18), 'Mr. F. affirms justification is two-fold.' Wesley saw no contradiction in stating what Paul intended by his use of the idea of justification, suggesting that this was not the only use of the term in Scripture. His reply to Hill at this juncture is quite simple:

Most true. And yet our Lord speaks of another justification (Matthew 12:37). Now I think one and one make two. (19)

When therefore Wesley argues that good works are not a condition of justification, but of final salvation, he clearly equates 'final salvation' with a 'second or final justification', and by 'justification' he intends a 'first justification'. Good works are thus relevant to the former, though not to the latter. By making this distinction - which Wesley considers has scriptural warrant - he avoids the kind of implication latent in Owen's position, and one which Gill evidently followed, in giving good works a contingent status where salvation is concerned.

In rejecting any explicit suggestion of a two-fold justification, Owen has much greater difficulty in asserting the necessity of good works than Wesley has, although he does assert their necessity in quite emphatic terms. In short, he cannot vindicate his emphasis, without resorting to some version of a two-fold

(18) See John Fletcher, Checks to Antinomianism (1771). Also J. C. Ryle, Christian Leaders of the Last Century (1978 rep.), pp.385f and Sell, op. cit., pp.63f. For Fletcher's theology, see D. R. Smith, John Fletcher, An Arminian Upholder of Holiness, in The Manifold Grace of God, Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference Report, 1968, pp.61-75.

(19) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 10, p.374.

justification, or an alternative distinction which virtually amounts to the same thing. In fact, Owen makes the rather remarkable concession, that if anyone concludes from his views regarding the justification of believers, that there is 'an evangelical justification', or if they shall 'call God's acceptance of our righteousness by that name, I shall by no means contend with them.' (20) What Owen((reluctantly?) appears to concede is precisely what Wesley is contending for.

Bearing in mind the fact that this controversial issue arises out of the apparently contradictory statements of Paul and James (see Romans 3:28 and James 2:24), the heart of this present discussion will involve an assessment of the antinomy itself. Before we do so, in the light of the varying viewpoints of Owen and Wesley, and the 'moderate' solutions of Baxter and Tillotson, it is necessary to see how Owen formally rejects the very suggestion of a two-fold justification, with all its ramifications, in favour of a once-for-all and complete justification.

In Owen's view, the theory of a two-fold justification is fallacious. He is prepared to concede that there is a 'two-fold justification before God mentioned in the Scripture', the first, by the works of the law (Romans 2:13; Matthew 19:16-19), and secondly, 'Here is a justification by grace, through faith in the blood of

(20) JF, p.159.

Christ; whereof we treat.' (21) He hastens to add that these two modes of justification are placed in antithesis: they do not constitute two complementary aspects of God's justifying grace.

And these ways of justification are contrary, proceeding on terms directly contradictory, and cannot be made consistent with or subservient one to the other. (22)

Owen insists that the theory of a two-fold justification seeks to reconcile the irreconcilable, leading to the inevitable denial of 'that justification which we have before God, in his sight through Jesus Christ', which 'is but one, and at once full and complete'(23). In short, Owen rejects the coining of 'arbitrary distinctions' (24), which, in his view, have no scriptural validity. For him, the complete justification which the believer receives from God by faith in Christ is such that no additional justification is necessary. To insist on the need for a second justification calls into question the adequacy of the first:

Wherefore it is evident, that either the first justification overthrows the second, rendering it needless; or the second destroys the first, by taking away what essentially belongs unto it: we must therefore part with the one or the other, for consistent they are not. (25)

As Owen has pointed out, the Roman view of justification is, in fact, sanctification in disguise. This applies as much to the first as to the second justification. Only by interpreting Paul's teaching in terms of subjective rather than objective grace, could

(21) Ibid, p.139.

(22) Ibid, p.139.

(23) Ibid, p.140.

(24) Ibid, p.142.

(25) Ibid, p.143.

the Jesuit controversialist Bellarmine (26) and the theologians of the Council of Trent (27) reinforce the Roman position against the theology of the Reformation. Rome could certainly appeal to church teaching and antiquity in support of her view. Thomas Aquinas held the opinion that 'the justification of the unrighteous as a whole consists by way of origin and source in the infusion of grace' (28). Notwithstanding B. B. Warfield's pregnant remark that the Reformation was 'the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the church (29), yet even the church father made his contribution to the theory of two-fold justification:

For we have been predestinated already, and even before we were. Called we were, when we were made Christians. We have this then too already. Justified. What? What is, justified?

Dare we say, that we have this third thing already? And shall there be any one of us who could dare to say, "I am just?" For I suppose that this is, "I am just," namely, "I am not a sinner." If you dare to say this, John meets you, "If we shall say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8) What then? Have we nothing of justice? (i.e. justification) Or have we, but have it not entire? ....If we shall say that we have nought of justice, we lie against the gifts of God. For if we have nought of justice, we have not even faith: if we have not faith, we are not Christians. But if we have faith, we have somewhat of justice already. (30)

Here, therefore, is a tendency to confuse justification with sanctification. Notwithstanding the reformers' debt to Augustine, in the area of predestination, and the doctrine of grace in general,

- (26) Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), dogmatist and theologian of the Counter-Reformation.
- (27) (1545-1563), Roman Council of the Counter-Reformation.
- (28) Summa Theologiae, ed. Cornelius Ernst (1972), p.185.
- (29) Calvin and Augustine (1956), p.322.
- (30) Sermon 108 on Romans 8:30, Homilies on the New Testament, (Parker ed.) (1845), Vol. 2, p.780-781. Elsewhere, Augustine provides a clear Pauline statement of justification. On the Spirit and the Letter, Anti-Pelagian Writings, ed. Schaff, pp.92,105.

the church father was not always considered a safe guide where 'justification' was concerned. John Calvin happily appeals to Ambrose's phrase of 'legal justification' to explain the true meaning of the forgiveness of sins (31), whilst 'the sentiment of Augustine, or at least his mode of expressing it, cannot be entirely approved of' (32). Calvin speaks for the Reformation, and in language John Owen would approve of; he clarifies the Roman theory of a two-fold justification:

....under the term justification they comprehend the renovation by which the Spirit forms us anew to the obedience of the Law; and in describing the righteousness of the regenerate man, maintain that being once reconciled to God by means of Christ, he is afterwards deemed righteous by his good works, and is accepted in consideration of them.(33)

One is impressed with the refreshing and uncongested biblicism of Calvin, compared with Owen's style and approach to the issues, especially when Owen states his view of the completeness of salvation:

Justification by faith in the blood of Christ may be considered either as to the nature and essence of it, or as unto its manifestation and declaration. The manifestation of it is two-fold: First, initial, in this life. Second, Solemn and complete, at the day of judgement.... (34)

It has already been shown that, notwithstanding their unanimous evaluation of the Roman view, Calvin did not teach Owen's 'once-for-all' theory of justification. Unlike Owen, Calvin also argued for a strict equivalence between 'justification' and 'pardon'.

(31) Institutes, III:11:3.

(32) Ibid, III:11:15.

(33) Ibid, III:14:11.

(34) JF, p.139.

It is interesting to note that although Owen repudiates a Roman-style dualism, he himself re-introduces a dualism of his own. He evidently felt the need to reconcile two apparently conflicting emphases:

- (1) Justification is a once-for-all and complete declaration in the sight of God.
- (2) A time-lapse occurs between the sinner's first believing, and the day of judgement.

Owen is not simply distinguishing between a justification viewed from an eternal standpoint on one hand, and its temporal manifestation on the other, since he insists that 'By our actual believing' we are 'at once completely justified' (35), that 'our justification is at once complete' on 'our first believing' (36). Had Owen resorted to the eternal/temporal distinction, he would not write as he does with regard to the role of faith, for this would suggest a sympathy for the hypercalvinist dogma of eternal justification - a view which Owen does not subscribe to. (37) His language is therefore somewhat ambiguous when he insists that justification is complete 'on our first believing', yet it is only initiated in this life, from the standpoint of its manifestation. He seems to be saying two things at once, which leaves the reader with a sense of unease.

The influence of aristotelian metaphysics, viz, the metaphysical

(35) Ibid, p.144.

(36) Ibid, p.144.

(37) 'For....evangelical justification, whereby a sinner is completely justified, that it should precede believing, I have not only not asserted, but positively denied, and disproved by many arguments.' Works, Vol. 10, p.449.

essence/properties distinction, is easily detected in Owen's formulation. He distinguishes between the nature or essence of justification, and its initial and final manifestation. For all his opposition to 'arbitrary distinctions', Owen readily allows a dualism in the manifestation of justification, if not in its essence, whereas the Roman theologians taught an essential dualism, i.e. two justifications. If Bertrand Russell is right in speaking of Aristotle's essence/properties distinction as a 'muddleheaded notion, incapable of precision' (38), then Owen has to choose either a two-fold justification (or a version of it), with its two-fold manifestation, or a single justification and its one manifestation. The fallacy is to apply the structure of subject-predicate propositions to extra-linguistic reality. It is meaningless to speak of the 'essence' of something, as something different from, and additional to, its properties or manifestation. It is meaningless to speak of the 'essence' of an object, over and above, say, its colour and shape. The object is what its appearances are. Likewise, 'justification' is what its manifestations are. (39)

By insisting that first believing is both the occasion of complete justification, and yet only its initial manifestation, suggests a confused solution originating in a kind of metaphysical analysis alien to the New Testament. Indeed, this manner of

(38) History of Western Philosophy (1961 ed.), p.177. The criticism is that no sense can be given to essence apart from its properties.

(39) See the discussion of this point supra, pp.219f.

discussing the issue is definitely foreign to the Apostle Paul. He certainly never spoke of a two-fold justification, but, equally, he never felt the need to distinguish between the essence of justification as a once-for-all reality, and its dual manifestation, in order to preserve the gratuitous and non-meritorious nature of justification.

Owen's aristotelian analysis is therefore an unsuccessful solution to the problem confronting him. He obviously has to choose between one justification, immediately completed on believing, in manifestation and essence - which is to deny any real significance to the final judgement - or the possibility that, with all the textual data taken into consideration, the biblical concept of justification is open to an alternative interpretation (40).

Owen shrinks from the idea that justification is incomplete, since this, according to him, has adverse implications for the doctrine of assurance:

And to say that no man is completely justified in the sight of God in this life, is at once to overthrow all that is taught in the Scriptures concerning justification, and therewithal all peace with God and comfort of believers. But a man acquitted upon his legal trial is at once discharged of all that the law hath against him. (41)

Does Owen suggest that the 'legal trial' is not the day of judgement? If it is not, then is the final judgement real, if the verdict has actually been given 'on first believing'? Furthermore,

(40) The Savoy Declaration (Chapter XI) does not elaborate on the idea of 'complete justification' as Owen does, although it is implied.

(41) JF, p.145.



is the believer's present comfort dependent upon a knowledge of a verdict already passed, irrespective of his continuing faith in Christ, and dependence upon that grace which enables him to persevere to the end? Owen's view could lead to antinomian abuse, if the believer's peace and comfort were dependent upon a complete 'justification', without regard to a life of continued piety.

We have already demonstrated the kind of choice Owen's exposition committed him to. Despite his formal rejection of a two-fold justification, his other distinction (an arbitrary one?) between the justification of sinners (as such) and the justification of believers, led him to the surprising statement that the believer's inherent righteousness will be taken into account at the 'last day', since 'the man that professeth evangelical faith ....shall be tried, judged....and justified' by it. (42) Such a statement did not seem to imply, in Owen's view, a threat either to the believer's comfort, or the all-sufficiency of grace, yet, arguably, it might have done.

Owen's rejection of a two-fold justification is therefore based upon his concern to exclude human merit from the terms of the discussion and to establish a solid foundation for the believer's assurance. We have seen that some of his arguments lack cogency, and that his exegesis involves some degree of ambiguity. Two questions

(42) Ibid, pp.159-160.

must be asked at this point:

- (1) Does a theory of justification, in which inherent righteousness is involved, necessarily militate against the gratuitous nature of justification?
- (2) Is the believer's assurance regarded as a guarantee of perseverance and final salvation, or is it related only to 'present' pardon?

In answer to the first question, Wesley was as confident in asserting that justification and salvation were entirely gratuitous as he was in stating that complete justification had a two-fold character. For him, there was not the contradiction evidently sensed by Owen. On one hand Wesley argued that 'Justification....is present pardon and acceptance with God', yet on the other hand, that 'entire sanctification goes before our justification at the last day.' (43) Although Wesley does not generally speak of first and second justification, yet he happily implies an equivalent distinction when he speaks of 'first acceptance or pardon', adding that 'both inward and outward holiness are the stated conditions of final justification' (44). We have also noted elsewhere his view that 'works are a condition (though not the meritorious cause) of final salvation' (45). Wesley does not consider that he is sacrificing any feature of the gospel of grace in speaking as he does. He certainly does not resort to any dubious metaphysical analysis in order to assert that God justifies

(43) Answer to the Revd. Mr. Church, Works, Vol. 8, p.372.

(44) Ibid, p.373.

(45) Letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Bennis, in Works, Vol. 12, p.372.

the sinner by grace alone. What is evident is his willingness to admit that the Bible does not use 'justification' in the particular way Owen seems to assume. Although, as we have seen, Wesley also distinguishes between first justification and sanctification, it must be conceded that in his view, final justification is based on inherent righteousness as well as Christ's imputed passive righteousness. However, there is no hint that he ever thought good works are meritorious causes of final justification, or that they are performed apart from grace:

By 'the grace of God' is sometimes to be understood that free love, that unmerited mercy, by which I, a sinner, through the merits of Christ, am now reconciled to God. But in this place (i.e. II Corinthians 2:12) it rather means that power of God the Holy Ghost, which 'worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure'. As soon as ever the grace of God in the former sense, his pardoning love, is manifested to our souls, the grace of God in the latter sense, the power of his Spirit, takes place therein. (46)

Although in 1772 Wesley was perfectly willing to endorse John Fletcher's view of a two-fold justification, yet, even as early as 1746, he was persuaded that the idea was compatible with Scripture. Whilst insisting that God 'justifieth the ungodly' and that 'only sinners....have pardon', Wesley affirms:

This seems not to be at all considered by those who so vehemently contend that a man must be sanctified, that is holy, before he can be justified; especially by such of them as affirm, that universal holiness or obedience must precede justification. (Unless they mean that justification at the last day which is wholly out of the present question.) (47)

(46) The Witness of our own Spirit (Sermon on II Corinthians 1:12), Works, Vol. 5, p.132.

(47) Justification by Faith, Works, Vol. 5, p.53.

Had Wesley accepted the distinction between first and second justification only five years earlier, he would not have criticised Archbishop Tillotson's position, 'that not faith alone, but good works also, are necessary in order to justification' (48). Wesley took exception to the Archbishop's sermons on Regeneration, yet in them, one finds utterances full of the kinds of emphasis Wesley was to make in later years. In arguing that saving faith is alone that 'faith which works by love' (Galatians 5:6), and that such implies 'the real renovation of our hearts and lives', Tillotson proceeds to say:

That this is the condition of our first Justification, that is, of the forgiveness of our sins, and our being received into the grace and favour of God is plain from all those texts, where this change is exprest by our repentance, and conversion, by our regeneration and renovation, by our purification and sanctification, or by any other terms of the like importance. (49)

At the first Methodist Conference (1744), we find Wesley arguing that not only faith, but 'repentance, and works meet for repentance', 'obeying God', 'doing good' are conditions of justification, i.e. first justification (50).

When, therefore, Tillotson insisted that good works are necessary for justification, he was not 'attacking....the fundamental doctrine of all Reformed churches; namely justification by faith alone'. In reply to the kind of accusation voiced by Wesley,

(48) True Christianity Defended (1741), Works, Vol. 7, p.433.

(49) Of the Nature of Regeneration, Till. I, p.390.

(50) Minutes of some late conversations, Works, Vol. 8, p.265.

Tillotson says:

That St. Paul, when he does so vehemently and frequently assert justification by the free grace of God, and by faith, without the works of the law, does not thereby exclude the necessity of works of righteousness and obedience to the moral precepts of the gospel, as the condition of our continuance in the favour of God, and of our final and perfect Justification and absolution by the sentence of the great day. (51)

Wesley's misgivings about Tillotson were therefore due to a failure to assess the Archbishop's biblical via media between Roman legalism and high Calvinist antinomianism. Tillotson's summary embodies all that Wesleyan evangelicalism was to stand for, on the subject of justification.

The sum and result of all which is this, that though we be justified at first by faith without works preceding, yet faith without good works following it will not finally justify and save us. (52)

Richard Baxter, whose moderate Calvinism placed him somewhat closer to Owen than the low church Archbishop was, could declare:

Neither pardon nor justification are perfect before death. For there are some correcting punishments to be yet born, some sins not fully destroyed, some grace yet wanting, more sins to be forgiven, more conditions thereof to be performed. The final and executive pardon and justification are only perfect. (52)

Baxter was equally sure that his position did not detract from the gratuitous nature of justification.

We have no works that are acceptable to God, but what are the fruits of his Spirit and grace. (54)

(51) Of the Necessity of Good Works, Till. II, p.363.

(52) Ibid, p.364. John Milton is even more succinct than the lucid Tillotson: 'Hence we are justified by faith without the works of the law, but not without the works of faith.' Treatise on Christian Doctrine, Prose Works of John Milton, (ed. Sumner) (1853), Vol. 4, p.355.

(53) EC, p.255.

(54) Ibid, p.249.

It is clearly arguable that a scheme of justification which takes inherent righteousness into account is not necessarily in conflict with gratuitous justification. However uneasy Owen is with regard to a two-fold justification, it is clear that Wesley, with the moderate Baxter and Tillotson, should not be bracketed with the Roman theologians for four reasons.

- (a) They do not confuse pardon with infused grace (although the two are correlated).
- (b) They assert that holiness is the result of grace alone.
- (c) They argue that good works, though necessary for salvation, are not its meritorious ground.
- (d) They argue that Christ's saving work is the sole meritorious cause of salvation.

In view of Owen's inability to provide a coherent statement of the sinner's justification, without taking inherent righteousness into account, and his actual admission that a believer, judged as such, shall be justified according to his own obedience, it may be said that Baxter speaks even for Owen when he says:

That without holiness none shall see God; And if any be accused as unholy (and on that account no member of Christ or a child of God, or heir of heaven) his holiness must be the matter of his justification. (55)

On the second question, relating to assurance, Owen insisted that an incomplete justification in this life militates against the believer's assurance. A vital question is, What is the believer

(55) Ibid, p.250.

assured of? Owen and Wesley are considerably at variance here.

The former relates assurance to eternal election and final

perseverance. Speaking of 'Electing love', Owen says:

It hath the same tendency and effect in the assurance we have from thence, that notwithstanding all the oppositions we meet withal, we shall not utterly and finally miscarry.(56)

It is entirely predictable that Wesley would not share this view of assurance because of his rejection of the Calvinistic ordo salutis. He questions whether the New Testament connects 'assurance' with the divine decrees unconditionally, as Owen suggests. In other words, is assurance related to election and perseverance, or simply to 'present pardon'? Is not assurance related accordingly to the active piety of the believer? Otherwise, one might claim an assurance, yet be devoid of true holiness. Wesley made plain his position as early as 1738. When another clergyman attacked the doctrine of assurance as inimical to true godliness, Wesley replied:

The assurance we preach is of quite another kind from that he writes against. We speak of an assurance of our present pardon; not, as he does, of our final perseverance.(57)

In like manner, Baxter, who did not share Wesley's Arminianism, was careful to state:

Assurance of perseverance and salvation is not here to be spoken of, but only of our present justification; and they are distinct questions.... (58)

(56) HS, p.601.

(57) Journal for October 6th, 1738. Works, Vol. 1, p.151.

(58) EC, p.279.

One of the arguments Owen uses to support his view of complete justification in this life, and thus his view of assurance, is that, 'All our sins, past, present, and to come were at once imputed unto and laid upon Jesus Christ.' (59) Because of this, the believer is assured of 'the actual pardon of all past sins, and the virtual pardon of future sins' (60). Owen does not deny that, because Christ has borne the penalty of sin, that the believer's transgressions are no longer regarded as sinful, but he does insist that the 'complete justification' for which he pleads, has placed the believer in an unpunishable state. The believer is no longer 'obnoxious unto the curse of the law', because he is 'justified'(61).

In principle, Wesley would have no quarrel with the idea of the complete sufficiency of the atonement, yet he would question some of Owen's inferences, and the general tendencies of his argument. Whilst Owen still insists that even sin in 'justified persons .....stands in need of daily pardon', and that sins cannot 'be actually pardoned before they are actually committed' (62), yet he maintains that the avoidance of sin in the believer 'is not so required of them as that if in anything they fail of their duty, they should immediately lose the privilege of their justification' (63). Despite all that Owen says by way of qualification, viz, daily sin must be repented of, etc, the statement just quoted is

(59) JF, p.143.

(60) Ibid, p.147.

(61) Ibid, p.146.

(62) Ibid, p.146-7.

(63) Ibid, p.149.



clearly open to abuse, unless strong safeguards are built into it. Owen's view could encourage a low view of holiness and a tolerance of sin if, by his own admission, sin cannot invalidate a believer's justified state. Sin is clearly nothing to be feared, if one's continuing justification is unaffected by it. In short, Owen's view tends to extinguish any urgency in the pursuit of holiness, despite all his arguments to the contrary. It is precisely because of the tendencies of Owen's view that Wesley was still dealing with justification and its related issues to the end of his life. The final entry in 'The Large Minutes', being minutes of the Methodist conference from 1744-1789, was probably made during the Leeds Conference of July, 1789. Wesley asks:

Does not talking, without proper caution, of a justified or a sanctified state, tend to mislead men; almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to the whole of our present inward tempers and outward behaviour. (64)

Wesley is therefore suggesting that unrepented sin, even in the believer, is grieving to the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30). His comment on Paul's words confirms this: Avoid 'any disobedience' until 'the day of judgement, in which our redemption will be completed' (65). Whereas Owen implies that disobedience cannot seriously injure the believer's eternal prospects, Wesley insists.

(64) Op. cit., Works, Vol. 8, p.325.

(65) Notes, Ephesians 4:30. Wesley warns against spiritual complacency: 'And think not to say, "I was justified once; my sins were once forgiven me:".....' The First Fruits of the Spirit, Works, Vol. 5, p.88.

that a life of obedience guarantees them, and that such is alone the sure evidence of being in a justified state.

With regard to their different conceptions about assurance as it relates to justification, Owen and Wesley possess a mediating alternative in Archbishop Tillotson. Owen is arguably correct to deduce from election the final perseverance of the true believer, yet still the Apostle Peter speaks of an indirect assurance of the believer's election and perseverance through a life of holiness and good works; '....give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.' (II Peter 1:10). On the other hand, Wesley, with his early view of direct assurance related only to 'present pardon', is surely correct in limiting his conception, if only to discourage the possibility of antinomian presumption. (66) As far as Tillotson was concerned, he was not regarded as a Calvinist, notwithstanding his puritan origins, but neither was he regarded as a rabid Arminian. Even allowing for certain exegetical differences, neither Owen nor Wesley could seriously find fault with Tillotson's solution to the problems we have discussed:

You see what is the great mark and character of a man's good or bad condition; whosoever doth righteousness is of God, and whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God (I John 3:10). Here is a plain and sensible evidence by which every man that will deal honestly with himself, may certainly know his own condition: and then, according

(66) After 1767, Wesley came to regard an assurance deduced from a holy life more reliable than that of a direct experience of assurance. See Tuttle, op. cit., p.315f.

as he finds it to be, may take comfort in it, or make haste out of it. And we need not ascend into heaven, nor go down into the deep, to search out the secret counsels and decrees of God: there needs no anxious enquiry whether we be of the number of God's elect: If we daily mortify our lusts, and grow in goodness, and take care to add to our faith and knowledge, temperance and patience and charity and all other Christian graces and virtues, we certainly take the best course in the world to make our calling and election sure (II Peter 1:10). And without this it is impossible that we should have any comfortable and well-grounded assurance of our good condition. (67)

There can be no doubt that the New Testament does not explicitly speak of a two-fold justification. As such, the idea is surely questionable. However, it was not only sanctioned by the Roman Catholic theologians. We have seen that even Protestant divines were attracted to a version of the theory for biblical and exegetical reasons. Even John Owen, despite his concern to preserve the Reformation insights regarding gratuitous justification could not avoid making concessions concerning the place of inherent righteousness in the justification of the believer. John Wesley was more explicit and less inhibited in his exposition of the matter, but he never considered that he was betraying the Reformation principle of sola gratia, any more than did Baxter and Tillotson before him.

It has already been pointed out in chapter two that Tillotson's view is significantly different even from Baxter's. The Archbishop always taught that 'justification' means 'pardon', whereas Baxter held that there are two kinds of justification - by faith and by

(67) The Distinguishing Character of a Good and Bad Man, Till. III, p.170.

obedience. Tillotson's view of initial and final justification merely suggests that justification is a continuum, since pardon of sin is the believer's daily need. The believer's obedience constitutes the subjective correlate of pardon. Justification is therefore by an obedient faith. Tillotson does not teach justification by good works as such. To suggest this is to misunderstand his position totally. Justification is always by faith, but faith itself is a comprehensive grace. Although Baxter shared Tillotson's view of faith, he failed to coherently to think through the implications of it. In teaching a double justification, Baxter implied that obedience was an appendage to faith, instead of an organic constituent of it. This incoherence was the chief source of his difficulties, and one which was transmitted to Wesley. However, it has also been pointed out, that the error involved is chiefly rooted in terminological ambiguities, rather than in any fundamental theological misconceptions. In this latter respect, Owen is arguably at fault. His version of complete justification was inadequate and even he is obliged to make concessions to a Baxterian-style theory of two-fold justification. It is not a Pauline conception that justification is a once-for-all event. The fact that Paul employs the aorist dikaiothentes in Romans 5:1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God....' merely proves that as and whenever present or past sins are pardoned (Romans 3:25),

i.e. whenever justification occurs, those particular sins are completely pardoned. There is a strict equivalence between 'pardon' and 'justification'. Calvin's exegesis at this point is irrefutable.

At any instant in the believer's experience, justification always relates to transgressions antecedent to that moment, in Wesley's view. (68) No licence is granted for future transgressions, therefore. Calvin expresses a similar thought (69), and his views on the necessity of 'daily pardon' have already been noted (70).

Central to the whole controversy is the apparent conflict between the Apostles Paul and James, and it is to that particular subject that we now turn in order to discover the true biblical synthesis. (71) This will be done with the conviction that it ought to be possible to arrive at a consistent conclusion, without suppressing any of the biblical data, or any of those themes which constitute the Gospel as a revelation of grace.

(68) Notes, Romans 3:25. See also, The First Fruits of the Spirit, Works, Vol. 5, p.87f.

(69) Comment, Romans 3:25.

(70) Vide supra, p.352f.

(71) See Guthrie's discussion on variety and unity in the New Testament, op. cit., pp.49f.

5: The Apostolic Antinomy.

In the final chapter of 'The Doctrine of Justification', John Owen considers the apparently contradictory statements made by Paul and James on the subject of justification. (See Romans 3:28 and James 2:24) Owen is concerned to demonstrate that, in fact, the two apostles agree, although he admits that 'the seeming difference' between Paul and James has occasioned many to 'take advantage, from some words and expressions used by the latter, directly to oppose the doctrine fully and plainly declared by the former' (1).

No discussion of justification would be complete without an assessment of this New Testament anomaly. Far more than the Reformation doctrine of grace is at stake, since the issue has implications for the authority of Scripture. P.H. Davids writes, 'Because of this possible conflict, James 2:24 must be viewed as a crux interpretum, not only for James but for New Testament theology in general.' (2) John Owen makes this clear when he assumes that two canonical books cannot contradict one another. In short, any possibility of real contradiction is ruled out, a priori. To deny this, is, in Owen's view, to admit serious consequences for the authority of Scripture:

(1) JF, p.384.

(2) The Epistle of James (1982), p.130.

It is taken for granted, on all hands, that there is no real repugnancy or contradiction between what is delivered by these two apostles; for if that were so, the writings of one of them must be pseudepistolae, or falsely ascribed unto them whose names they bear, and uncanonical, - as the authority of the Epistle of James hath been by some, both of old and of late, highly but rashly questioned. (3)

Owen confesses that the issue is a highly problematic one. His doctrine of Scripture demands the view that the words of Paul and James 'are certainly capable of a just reconciliation', yet he honestly admits, somewhat paradoxically 'that we cannot any of us attain thereunto'. Failure to agree in the correct exposition of the passages in question is due to 'the darkness of our own minds, the weakness of our understandings, and, with too many, from the power of prejudices' (4).

Before we undertake a detailed discussion of the views of both Owen and Wesley, it might be profitable to place the controversy engendered by the Paul-James antinomy in the wider context of historical theology, particularly as it relates to the Augustinian tradition.

It has been shown that Augustine himself taught an embryonic form of the doctrine of two-fold justification. It is therefore predictable that he would find less difficulty in reconciling Paul with James than those who insist, like Owen, that justification is once and complete in this life. (5) Augustine argues that 'faith without good works is not sufficient for salvation'. After reminding the 'unintelligent reader' that, whilst Paul insists 'a man is

(3) JF, p.384.

(4) Ibid, p.384.

(5) Ibid, p.140.

justified by faith without the works of the law' (Romans 3:28), the faith in question is one 'which worketh by love' (Galatians 5:6), Augustine adds:

It is such faith which severs God's faithful from unclean demons - for even these 'believe and tremble', as the Apostle James says (James 2:19); but they do not do well. Therefore they possess not the faith by which the just man lives, - the faith which works by love in such wise, that God recompenses it according to its works with eternal life. But inasmuch as we have even our good works from God, from whom likewise comes our faith and love, therefore the self-same great teacher of the Gentiles has designated 'eternal life' itself as His gracious 'gift'. (Romans 6:23) (6)

Augustine evidently thinks that James' justification by works in some way 'supplements' or explains the meaning of Paul, without allowing his insistence on good works to detract from the gratuitous nature of salvation. Even good works are the result of grace. Such a statement as Augustine provides is perfectly consistent with the view that good works contribute toward the believer's final justification, and that such can never be complete in this life.

Notwithstanding the vitiating influences of aristotelianism and sacramentalism upon his thinking, Thomas Aquinas was in the Augustinian tradition. William Cunningham admits that Aquinas' works contain 'some sound and important matter in illustration and defence of the doctrines of grace' (7). However, Aquinas taught a

(6) On Grace and Free Will, in Anti-Pelagian Works, (ed. Schaff), p.451.

(7) Historical Theology, (1862, 4th ed., 1960), Vol. 1, p.423.



development of Augustine's view of the incompleteness of justification. Taking note of the fact, as Cornelius Ernst points out, that Aquinas' discussion of justification in the Summa Theologiae deals more with the processus justificationis than with the type of debate common at the Reformation (8), we nevertheless find Aquinas stating that 'It seems that the justification of the unrighteous does not take place in an instant but in successive stages.' (9) This statement is thoroughly consistent with a theory of two-fold justification, and also with the view that James' teaching is relevant to this theory.

It may be said that the Paul-James discrepancy only presented itself as a problematic anomaly at the Reformation. Even John Wycliffe, for all his anticipation of Luther, did not consider the teaching of the Apostle James to be in any sense at variance with the Pauline doctrine of grace. Indeed, faced as Wycliffe was by the widespread corruption of both laity and clergy, he appeals to James in warning against ungodliness and antinomianism:

But as belief by itself is not sufficient to men's salvation, without good works, as Christ said by his apostle St. James, he (i.e. the author Wycliffe) proposes with God's help, to speak upon each of the commandments of God, in which are contained charitable works, that belong to faith.(10)

The influence of Augustine is clearly evident, as is also the suggestion that the law is essential for the believer's sanctification.

(8) Summa Theologiae, ed. Ernst (1972), Vol. 30, p.238.

(9) Ibid, p.183.

(10) The prologue to 'The Poor Caitiff, Writings of the Reverend and learned John Wickliffe, DD, (n.d. 1840?), p.50.

Wycliffe seems also to suggest that Paul's notion of faith in Galatians 5:6, 'faith which worketh by love', and James insistence on works, James 2:14-26, are perfectly compatible:

To believe in God, as St. Augustine saith, is, in belief to cleave to God through love, and to seek busily to fulfil his will; for no man truly believeth in God, but he that loveth God, and by his good living believeth to have bliss of God, as a great doctor saith. And no man sinneth against God but he fails in belief, which is the ground of all good works. (11)

It was because of statements like this that Philip Melancthon described Wycliffe as being 'ignorant of the righteousness of faith' (12), a fact which Robert Vaughan only partially concedes when he says 'It must be acknowledged that this tenet is more frequently adverted to in the writings of Luther, than in those of Wycliffe' (13). However, Luther's 'reliance on the atonement of Christ as the only and certain medium of acceptance for the guilty' was fully embraced by Wycliffe, and, as Vaughan is careful to point out, Wycliffe saw 'the word salvation....as comprehending the articles of justification and sanctification. This we know, is the manner of the sacred writers.' (14)

It is an undeniable fact that Luther, as Calvin was also to do, rejected the Augustinian conception of justification, whilst expressing his debt to the church father in the area of the doctrine of grace in general. It is also common knowledge that Luther branded

(11) Ibid, p.53.

(12) See Robert Vaughan, The Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe, DD, (1831), Vol. 2, p.324.

(13) Ibid, p.325.

(14) Ibid, p.326.

the letter of James as an 'epistle of straw' in the preface to his German New Testament, published in 1522. In the heat of the discovery of salvation by grace alone, Luther dealt with the Paul-James discrepancy at a stroke by denying James' epistle to be apostolic, a conviction which was to remain unchanged. In his preface to the epistles of James and Jude, which was little altered even as late as the edition of 1546 (the year of the reformer's death), Luther still maintained that James' epistle was not 'of apostolic authorship', because its teaching was 'in direct opposition to St. Paul and all the rest of the Bible' (15). Despite the suggestion by some Lutheran scholars that Luther changed his attitude (16), Bertram Lee Woolf says that in the 1546 edition, Luther 'adopts in some respects a milder tone than in the few words in the last paragraph of his general introduction to the New Testament, or at least a form of words that leaves less room for scoffing or parody. But his critical attitude is as firm as ever.' (17)

Luther's opinion was, of course, only a minority view amongst the Reformed theologians. Neither continental nor British divines, in the main, doubted the apostolicity of the epistle of James. They could not therefore solve the problem in question in the manner Luther had done. John Calvin established a questionable precedent in proposing this solution to the problem posed by James' phrase

(15) Preface to the Epistles of St. James and Jude, in Reformation Writings of Martin Luther, tr. Bertram Lee Woolf, (1956), Vol. 2, p.306.

(16) Philip Doddridge cites Wolfius and Fabricus in support of this suggestion, see The Family Expositor, Works, (ed. Williams and Parsons) (1802-5), Vol. 10, p.207.

(17) Op. cit., p.306 (emphasis mine).

'justified by works':

It appears certain that he is speaking of the manifestation, not of the imputation of righteousness, as if he had said, Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works.... (18)

Calvin arrives at this solution only by insisting that to 'make James consistent with the other Scriptures and with himself, you must give the word justify, as used by him, a different meaning from what it has with Paul' (19).

The Anglican Reformers, for the most part, approached the problem as Calvin did. Thomas Cranmer - who was the author of the Homilies on Salvation, Faith and Good Works in the first Book of Homilies (1547) - understood James 2:14-26 to be simply saying 'Thy deeds and works must be an open testimonial of thy faith....' (20) Good works are therefore merely evidential, not a basis of justification. Elsewhere, however, Cranmer provides a more considered statement of the actual meaning of the problematic phrase, which is rather different from Calvin's understanding and the position of the homilies:

St. James meant of justification in another sense, when he said 'A man is justified by works, and not by faith only'. For he spake of such a justification which is a declaration, continuation, and increase of that justification which St. Paul spake of before. (21)

There is surely some ambiguity here. One can only say that

(18) Institutes III:17:12.

(19) Ibid, III:17:12. See Comment, James 2:23f.

(20) Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer, (Parker Society), (1846), p.140.

(21) Notes on Justification, in Miscellaneous Writings, op. cit., p.208.

James speaks of a 'continuation and increase of that justification' spoken of by Paul, if the two apostles are using the word in the same sense. By stating the matter as he does, Cranmer appears to be making concessions to the Augustinian view, that Paul's justification is incomplete. Had Cranmer merely said that James was speaking of a declaration of justification, his view would concur with Calvin's, and the position of the Homilies, but he possibly considers such an exposition to be inadequate.

Richard Hooker clearly thought that speaking of James' 'justification' as the manifestation of Paul's 'justification' was a little too simple, since he does not employ this solution. However, the problem is clear: 'For except there be an ambiguity in some term, St. Paul and St. James do contradict each other; which cannot be.' Hooker therefore resorts to terminological latitude:

Finding therefore that justification is spoken of by St. Paul without implying sanctification, when he proveth that a man is justified by faith without works; finding likewise that justification doth sometimes imply sanctification also with it; I suppose nothing more sound, than so to interpret St. James as speaking not in that sense, but in this. (22)

Hooker goes further than Cranmer. Whilst he insists that we are justified by faith alone, he speaks of a first justification, viz, the remission of sins, and a 'second justification consisting in good works'. He does not confuse first justification with

(22) A Learned Discourse of Justification, Works, and how the Foundation is Overthrown, in The Works of Richard Hooker, ed. Keble, (1836), Vol. 3, (part 2), pp.630-1.

infused grace, as Augustine did, but his account of James 2:24 is different from Calvin's.

To be justified so far as remission of sins, it sufficeth if we believe what another hath wrought for us: but whosoever will see God face to face, let him show his faith by his works, demonstrate a first justification by a second as Abraham did: for in this verse Abraham was justified (that is to say, his life was sanctified) by works. (23)

Hooker not only identifies 'second justification' with 'sanctification', but he virtually re-writes a verse of Scripture in the process.

The evidence thus far would suggest that the epistle of James did pose a definite problem for the Reformation. The solutions we have considered are by no means as unanimous as in their agreement over what Paul means by justification. Cranmer seems a little hesitant, whilst Calvin and Hooker lean in Luther's direction, not in deleting James from the canon, but in suggesting, albeit differently, that the inspired penman meant something other than what he wrote.

The English Puritans tended to follow Calvin's exposition of James 2:24, but with some differences. The Presbyterian John Flavel (1628-1691), in his Exposition of the Shorter Catechism says 'The two apostles contradict not one another; Paul speaks of justification before God; and James of justifying our faith before men.'(24)

(23) Fragments of an Answer to the Letter of certain English Protestants, Works, Vol. 2, p.702.

(24) Works, (1968 rep.), Vol. 6, pp.196-7.  
For biographical sketches of some of the Puritans, see Peter Lewis, The Genius of Puritanism, (2nd ed., 1979), pp.19-34.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677), also a presbyterian, expounds James' 'justification' as 'acquitted from hypocrisy' (25). The Bible commentator Matthew Poole (d. 1685?), another presbyterian, writes similarly that by works a man is 'declared to be righteous, or approved as such, and acquitted from the guilt of hypocrisy....'(26) Walter Marshall (1628-1680), author of the famous 'The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification' (1692), denies that James is speaking of justification 'in a proper sense', but only 'of the declaration and manifestation of it by its fruits' (27). In a sermon entitled 'The Doctrine of Justification opened and applied', Marshall adds the thought that 'Works justify us from such accusations of men as will deny us to have justification by faith....' (28)

Dr. Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679), the eminent Independent and colleague of Dr. John Owen, interprets James 2:24 as meaning no more than that 'our salvation is manifested to others by good works as well as by faith' (29). The Baptist John Bunyan (1628-1688), distinguishes between 'justification before God' and 'justification before men', insisting that 'faith needeth (no) good works as an help' to the former. However, in a treatise concerned to combat the increasing 'torrent of iniquity' in restoration England, Bunyan asks 'Is there, therefore, no need at all of good works, because a

(25) An Exposition on the Epistle of James, (1962 rep.), p.260.

(26) A Commentary on the Holy Bible, (1963 rep.), Vol. 3, p.888.

(27) Op. cit., (ed. n.d., 1896?), p.146.

(28) Ibid, p.442.

(29) Sermon XXIII, on Ephesians 2:8-10, in Works, (1861), (Nichol's series), Vol. 2, p.245.

man is justified before God without them? Or can that be called a justifying faith, that has not for its fruit good works, Job 22:3; James 2:20,26. Verily good works are necessary, though God need them not; ....' (30)

The famous Dissenting commentator, Matthew Henry (1662-1714), whose views frequently reveal the influence of Richard Baxter, expounds James 2 somewhat differently from the earlier Puritan divines. It was usually said that James' notion of faith was different from Paul's, yet Henry says that Paul 'plainly speaks of another sort of work than James does, but not another sort of faith'. However, Henry does agree that the two apostles speak of different justifications, and that 'one speaks of our persons being justified before God, the other speaks of our faith being justified before men'. As if Henry feels that this is not really what is stated in James 2:24, he offers a tentative alternative which has more in common with Augustinian dualism, and the theories of Baxter and Tillotson:

Paul may be understood as speaking of that justification which is inchoate; James of that which is complete; it is by faith only that we are put into a justified state, but then good works come in for the completing of our justification at the last great day. (31)

It is surely to Henry's \* credit that he is not dogmatic in his exposition, especially when Protestant divines had been far

(30) A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity (1684), in Works, (1855), Vol. 2, p.507.

(31) Comment on James 2:24, in An Exposition of the Old and New Testament, (Nisbet ed., 1886), Vol. 9, p.619.

\*Note: Since Henry died (1714) before completing his exposition, other authors were responsible for the epistles and Revelation. Henry's style, method and sentiments were largely followed. The Epistle of James was completed by Dr. Samuel Wright (1683-1746). See J. B. Williams, Memoirs of....Rev. Matthew Henry (1828), p.308.



from unanimous in their sentiments. He is prepared to explore the most natural possible meaning of the passage in question, something which cannot be said about some of the other expositors we have considered. In short, together with their mentor Calvin, one feels that whereas the Puritan divines state things which are consistent with James's general emphasis, one hesitates to say that their comments do full justice to James' actual statements. In other words, good works do evidence salvation to others, they do manifest justification, they do vindicate a believer from the charge of hypocrisy. The question remains, is this all James is saying? If so, why does he employ such strong language concerning Abraham and Rahab, that they were both 'justified by works' (James 2:21,25), instead of some other expression. If Calvin and the Puritans are right, then James really meant that men are 'approved' (dokimos) by works, a word which he did use in chapter 1:12, and which he might have used in chapter 2:24. Did he not realise that his readers would interpret 'ex argon dikaiontai anthropos' (v.24) in reference to the teaching of the Apostle Paul? In short, why did the Apostle James employ a term, perfectly understood in a Pauline context, if he intended to teach a different truth?

The Latitudinarian divines provide an exposition of the Paul-James antinomy which, when carefully compared with the Puritan

solution, has much to commend it. In his Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles (1699), Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715) suggests that the word justified is capable of two senses:

The one is, a man who is in the favour of God by a mere act of his grace, or upon some consideration not founded on the holiness or merit of the person himself. The other is, a man who is truly holy, and as such is beloved of God. (32)

In defining the phrase 'faith only', in Article XI and its implied use in Romans 3:28, Burnet says:

By faith only is not meant faith as it is separated from the other evangelical graces and virtues; but faith, as it is opposite to the rites of the Mosaical law. (33)

In dealing with the apparent contradiction between Romans 3:28 and James 2:24, Burnet asserts that

St. James....says expressly that 'a man is justified by his works, and not by faith only'; yet he does not say, by the works of the law; so that he does not at all contradict St. Paul; the works that he mentions not being the circumcision or ritual observances of Abraham, but his offering up his son Isaac, which St. Paul had reckoned a part of the faith of Abraham; this shows that he did not intend to contradict the doctrine delivered by St. Paul, but only to give a true notion of the faith that justifies; that it is not a bare believing, such as devils are capable of, but such a believing as exerted itself in good works. So that the faith mentioned by St. Paul is the complex of all Christianity; whereas that mentioned by St. James is a bare believing, without a life suitable to it. (34)

Compared with the doctrine of justification as expressed in the formularies of the Anglican Reformation, Burnet, like Hooker before him, is breaking new ground. He would undoubtedly argue that he was only making explicit what was already implied in the articles and

(32) Op. cit., (1841 ed.), p.160.

(33) Ibid, p.162.

(34) Ibid, p.163.

homilies, but in 'spelling out' the actual statements of James, rather than speaking in general terms about works evidencing faith, he was, together with others of his school, suggesting a more satisfactory solution to the problem. It is certainly arguable that, from the quotations given, neither Cranmer nor Hooker were entirely satisfied with the standard Reformation exposition of James 2:24, and both men seem, in different degrees, to be in sympathy with the Augustinian view that justification involves a comprehensive conception of faith. This was certainly true of Burnet, who together with Tillotson, popularised the views of George Bull's (1634-1710) Harmonia Apostolica (1667) (35).

During the eighteenth century, dissenting opinion was no more unanimous than that of the earlier generation. Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) thought that the Apostles Paul and James would be reconciled 'in the easiest manner' by observing that 'the faith by which St. Paul says (Abraham) was justified, was such a faith as includes good works in it, as a certain principle of them' (36). In his academy lectures, Doddridge again states that 'Faith in Christ is a very extensive principle, and includes in its nature and inseparable effects the whole of moral virtue' (37). Doddridge is therefore saying that Paul's conception of faith comprehends what James means by faith and works, and that James 2:24 and Romans 3:28

(35) Op. cit., (English trans.) (1842), pp.64f.

(36) Comment on James 2:23, in The Family Expositor, Works, Vol. 10, p.228.

(37) Works, Vol. 5, p.218.

in no way contradict one another once this is understood. On the other hand, the Baptist Dr. John Gill (1697-1771), whose denial of the necessity of good works for salvation has been noted, seems content to expound James conception of justification as the justification of a man's faith, rather than his person (38). Again, whilst Gill expresses some very Scriptural thoughts on the nature of faith and its activity in a life of good works, one questions whether he really comes to terms with what James actually says. The same can be said for the American divine Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), who writes that the 'Apostle James seems to use the word justify for manifestative justification', and that 'works justifying' are only 'a sign or evidence' (39).

Turning to the nineteenth century, one finds James Buchanan (1804-1870) being less cautious than Edwards seems to be, when he asserts that 'It is equally clear, that the Apostle James, while he refers incidentally....to the actual justification of sinners in the sight of God, is....engaged....rather in illustrating the declarative justification of believers.' (40) Buchanan, for all his sympathy with the general position of Calvin and the English Puritans, regards it as 'a defective statement to say that' James 'speaks only of justification before men' (41), notwithstanding his distinction between actual and declarative justification. The

(38) Sermon XIII, The Law Established by the Gospel, in A Collection of Sermons and Tracts (1773), Vol. 1, p.207.

(39) Justification by Faith Alone, in Works, (1974 rep.), Vol. 1, p.651.

(40) The Doctrine of Justification, (1961 rep.), p.257.

(41) Ibid, p.258.

same point is made by Ralph Wardlaw (1779-1853) in his lucid Lectures on the Epistle of James (1862), when he says that 'believers are justified not to men only, but to God' (42). However, Wardlaw insists that there are two distinct justifications. His exposition is reminiscent of the view Owen felt obliged to admit when he says:

The one treats of the justification before God of a sinner, considered as condemned by the law; the other treats of the justification of a professed believer in Christ, regarded in that capacity. (43)

This is different from saying that James' words relate to the completion of one's first justification; the two justifications are distinct. However, Wardlaw evidently thinks that, Paul and James taken together, the Scriptures teach a dual justification, and that 'a man' is justified 'before God' by 'faith and works', albeit in the dual status of 'a sinner' and 'a believer'. Wardlaw is emphatic in rejecting the view that works are mere evidences of faith:

The Saviour and Judge of men acquits, and welcomes into his heavenly kingdom, those who had manifested their faith and love by appropriate works. (44)

Wardlaw, then, is plainly not satisfied with speaking of good works as mere evidences of justification. Their role is not simply to prove the reality of true faith, as Robert Haldane (1764-1842) suggests. (45)

(42) Op. cit., p.183.

(43) Ibid, p.179.

(44) Ibid, p.185.

(45) Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans (1963 rep.), p.155.

Amongst the many twentieth century commentators, D. M. Lloyd-Johnes adopts the same approach as Haldane, (46), whereas Louis Berkhof is prepared to admit that merely discussing the issue on this level 'does not explain the whole difficulty, since James explicitly says in verse 24 that a man is justified by works and not only by faith'(47). However, although this writer admits that James is speaking of 'a further justification' he seems to revert to the evidential theory when he concludes that 'The justification of the just by works confirms the justification by faith.' (48)

According to J. H. Ropes, James' discussion of dikaiosis does not depart from the meaning attached to it by Paul. Faith and works are inseparable, therefore justification is not a once-for-all event. 'Abraham's justification depended not merely on the initial act of faith, but also on his confirmatory manifestation of this faith under trial.' (49)

According to R. Bultmann, James' treatment of faith and works is simply a corrective to certain misunderstandings of Paul's theology (50). Karl Barth sees the solution to the apparent contradiction in the correct view of faith.

Paul never even dreamed of the kind of pistis envisaged and criticised in James 2:14-26 - the faith which has no ergo, which is inactive, ....There is no other faith than that 'which worketh by love'. (51)

Alan Richardson argues that James is not discussing the 'works'

(46) Romans: Exposition of chapters 3:20 - 4:25, Atonement and Justification, (1970), p.123. See F. F. Bruce, Justification in the Non-Pauline Writings, EQ, April, 1952, pp.66-77.

(47) Systematic Theology, (1963 rep.), p.521.

(48) Ibid, p.521.

(49) The Epistle of James (1916), (I.C.C.), pp.218-219. See also A. Plummer on James 2:24 (Expositor's Bible).

(50) Theology of the New Testament (1955), Vol. 2, p.131.

(51) Church Dogmatics, tr. Bromiley (1958), Vol. 4, part 2, p.731.

excluded by Paul in Romans 3:28:

James means acts of mercy and kindness to those in distress, Christian charity in action....justification is by faith that is demonstrated in action. Thus in James' language, it may be said that Abraham was justified by works without contradicting Paul's assertion that no one is justified by works of the law in the sense of the meritorious observance of a legal code. (52)

J. Gresham Machen makes the same observation. 'The faith about which Paul has been speaking is not the idle faith which James condemns, but a faith that works.' (53) Herman Ridderbos similarly argues that faith and works are only mutually exclusive where the question of merit is concerned. Otherwise, 'That faith and works....belong inseparably together is evident from the whole of Paul's preaching. Not only is faith at work through love (Galatians 5:6), but the Apostle speaks in so many words of 'the work of faith....' (54)

On the other hand, P. H. Davids definitely teaches a two-fold justification. Unlike other contemporary scholars, he asserts 'one must not read this verse (James 2:24) with Pauline definitions in mind, but rather allow James to speak out of his own background' (55). Donald Guthrie disagrees. He also says that 'The kind of works that James is concerned about is the kind that results from genuine faith ....Paul would have been as opposed as James is to mere intellectual assent.' (56) Thus, James is really correcting misunderstandings of

(52) An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (1958), pp.240-241.

(53) The New Testament (1975), p.239. W. G. Kummel (The Theology of the New Testament, tr. J. E. Steely (1974)), Hans Conzelmann (An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament, tr. J Bowden (1969)), and G. E. Ladd (A Theology of the New Testament (1975)) do not appear to discuss the implications of James 2:24.

(54) Paul, An Outline of his Theology, tr. J. R. De Witt (1977), p.132.

(55) Op. cit., p.132.

(56) New Testament Theology (1981), p.599.

Paul's theology of faith.

To conclude this outline, certain observations may be made. Two distinct viewpoints emerge, despite a common Augustinian emphasis on salvation by grace alone. The first viewpoint may be called the semi-Augustinian position, as represented by Cranmer, Hooker, Henry, Burnet, Doddridge and Wardlaw, whereas the views of Luther, Calvin, Goodwin and the other Puritans, together with Gill, Edwards, Buchanan, Haldane, Berkhof and Lloyd-Jones may be described as the Reformed Augustinian position. Contemporary scholarship leans decidedly in the semi-Augustinian direction. It must be pointed out that the semi-Augustinians do not confuse justification with sanctification, although some agreement does exist between them and Augustine, Aquinas and Wycliffe on their understanding of James 2:24, with its dualistic overtones. They are seemingly unconvinced by the 'evidential' view. It should also be pointed out that in Augustine's case, his own position is, to a much greater degree than Aquinas, to be distinguished from the later Roman view, especially where the medieval doctrine of merit is concerned. (57)

The above distinction between semi- and Reformed Augustinianism is being drawn, chiefly with regard to the Paul-James antinomy. It might be said that Reformed Augustinianism constituted something of an over-reaction to the Roman view, and that the semi-Augustinian

(57) See Buchanan, op. cit., p.102f.



synthesis points the way to a truly Biblical via media, without suppressing any of the textual data in favour of a theological theory. In short, the semi-Augustinian approach seems to provide a more satisfactory account of James 2:24, without sacrificing the clear Biblical emphasis on salvation by grace alone.

The survey we have made will enable us to place the contributions of Dr. John Owen and John Wesley in a wider theological context. Since Owen probably provided one of the most thorough puritan expositions of the Paul-James antinomy, we must now proceed to examine his account, and, in due course, compare it with the viewpoint of John Wesley.

Before Owen undertakes a detailed analysis of the issues in question, he endeavours to establish a basic exegetical principle, i.e. in the event of an apparent contradiction in Scripture, the passage or statement which gives a thorough and exhaustive account of the matter should be regarded as normative, rather than the passage where the same matters are stated in a more incidental manner. 'The truth is to be learned, stated, and fixed from the former place.' (58) In applying this principle, Owen is saying that the doctrine of justification by faith is learned, not from the Apostle James, but from the Apostle Paul, since the latter gives a more thorough and comprehensive statement of the doctrine

(58) JF, p.384.

in his writings. 'From them is light to be taken into all other places of Scripture where it is occasionally mentioned.' (59) In other words, Paul is intended to illuminate James, and not vice versa. Furthermore, the Apostle James was not concerned with a formal and detailed exposition of man's justification before God, but with vindicating the doctrine from abuse, a fact which leads Owen to make four crucial observations:

(1) Firstly, the Apostles differ in purpose. In his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, Paul's concern is to show how 'a guilty, convinced sinner....is justified in the sight of God' (60). Although the Apostle urges the 'duties of righteousness and holiness' upon believers, yet 'this he doth not do in any place by intimating or granting that our own works of obedience or righteousness are necessary unto, or have any causal influence into, our justification before God' (61).

This statement, as has been shown, is directly contradicted by an earlier one, where Owen admits that 'a man that professeth evangelical faith, or faith in Christ....shall be justified by his own personal, sincere obedience' (62). Owen attempts to evade the charge of inconsistency by means of a distinction between the justification of sinners and the justification of believers, regarded as such. However, this is a distinction to no significant purpose, since Owen implies, contrary to his main thesis, that the initial

(59) Ibid, p.385.

(60) Ibid, p.387.

(61) Ibid, p.388.

(62) Ibid, p.160.

justification is insufficient. In fact, by this distinction, Owen is constrained to make concessions to a dualistic theory, viz, that men are initially justified as sinners, and consequently as believers, viewed as such.

The repetition of this criticism is relevant at this juncture, particularly when Owen outlines the purpose of the Apostle James' discussion of justification. Owen is surely correct to say that James is not discussing justification as Paul does, but it is questionable whether he can assert that

He doth not direct any how they may be justified before God, but convinceth some that they are not justified by trusting unto such a dead faith (-unfruitful in good works, i.e. -); and declares the only way whereby any man may really evidence and manifest that he is so justified indeed. (63)

Owen reveals his basic understanding of this problematic passage in James, viz, good works merely evidence or manifest one's justification. That this is an inadequate conception is surely suggested by James 2:14 '....though a man say he hath faith, and have not works, can faith save him?' The Apostle does not ask 'can faith be evidenced' without works, since he speaks in the context, not merely of evidence of justifying faith, but of salvation itself. In other words, the immediate intentions of the two Apostles are different, yet one cannot say that James is dealing with merely evidential considerations, or that Paul can be construed as denying

(63) Ibid, p.389 (emphasis mine). Not even 'professed believers?'

any place to obedience in the final justification of the believer.

(See chapter three of this section.)

(2) Owen's second main observation is that the two Apostles 'speak not of the same faith' (64). This is surely, in the main, correct. James is exposing a spurious, counterfeit faith. From vv.14-20, one might read 'dead faith' for 'faith'. At this point, Owen refutes Bellarmine's idea that the faith intended by James 'is justifying faith considered in itself', with a criticism which surely holds good in the light of v.19 '....the devils also believe ....' Owen agrees that Abraham's faith, vv.21-23 is of a different character from that which James had earlier 'treated with so much severity'. However, making this distinction leads to a difficulty where Owen's next criticism of Bellarmine is concerned. The Cardinal is 'utterly mistaken' to suppose that the Apostle ascribes justification 'partly to works, and partly to faith' in Owen's view, since 'he ascribes justification, in the sense by him intended, wholly to works, in opposition to that faith concerning which he treats. For there is a plain antithesis in the words between works and faith as unto justification....' (65)

One questions whether Owen is quite correct here. Had James intended justification to be entirely of works, why then does he quote Genesis 15:6, a verse which Paul quotes to prove that Abraham

(64) Ibid, p.390.

(65) Ibid, p.391 (emphasis mine).

was justified by faith (Romans 4:4; Galatians 3:6)? Since James refers to the testing of Abraham's faith in the patriarch's willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:12), there is no necessary antithesis between the 'faith' of Genesis 15:6 and the 'work' of Genesis 22:12, since such a faith was different from the dead faith of vv.14-20. If, in v.24, James intends the phrase 'faith only' to be the dead faith of the earlier verses, then Owen is correct to interpret the Apostle as ascribing justification 'wholly to works'. On the other hand, if James means by 'faith only' Abraham's genuine faith (which makes sense of the reference to Genesis 15:6 in v.23), then v.24 must be understood to imply that justification is initiated by faith and completed by obedience, an idea which v.22 tends to support, viz, 'by works was faith made perfect'. Such an exegesis tends also to support Owen's inconsistent theory of the justification of believers by their obedience. It is not totally clear whether James does intend in v.24 'dead faith' or 'living faith', in which case, it is difficult to reach a definite conclusion. The alternative to Owen's view is arguable if the faith of v.24 is being illustrated by the Genesis 15:6 reference. The retention of the adverb 'only' in v.24 would (contrary to Owen's view) suggest an implied conjunction of faith and works, rather than a mutually exclusive antithesis. It may be significant

to note that the Apostle Paul does not say 'faith only' in Romans 3:28 or Romans 5:1 ('Being justified by faith, we have peace with God....'), implying that in excluding the 'works of the law', he does not exclude 'the good works of faith' any more than James does.

It seems, on reflection, that the textual anomaly which occasioned this controversy can only be removed by terminological 'adjustment'. Most of the commentators employ this method, choosing to adjust or modify that term which least consists with their particular thesis, the terms in question being 'faith', 'justified' and 'works'. The semi-Augustinians tend to modify 'faith' and 'works', whereas the Reformed Augustinians modify 'justified'. We have already shown in chapter three that by expounding Paul's conception of faith as including obedience in its essential nature (66), the Latitudinarians - Tillotson and Burnet in particular - make Paul's statement about justification by faith to include what James is saying. In other words, Paul's 'faith' is more than mere trust; his frequent emphasis on the necessity of good works amounts to making the identical emphasis made by the Apostle James. Such an approach might well suggest a solution to the anomaly.

(3) In his third main observation, Owen suggests that the two Apostles 'speak not of justification in the same sense nor unto the same end'. In Owen's view, Paul writes about 'our absolute

(66) The Apostle speaks of 'the obedience of faith' (Romans 1:5; 16:26), and of 'faith which worketh by love' (Galatians 5:6), as well as frequently employing 'faith' and 'obedience' as synonymous terms (Romans 11:16; II Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9).

justification before God', whereas James 'treats of justification only as to the evidence and manifestation of it' (67). This adjustment is far more radical than the Latitudinarian one, which is little more than an exposition of what Paul actually says. Owen, on the other hand, is saying that James, speaking of dikaiosis, means something quite different. The chief criticism of this approach is that it amounts to a re-writing of Scripture. Another objection, which has already been noted, is that James does appear to be assuming the context of salvation itself (v.14b), rather than its mere evidence. A more serious objection has also been made in the previous chapter, viz, that it is Owen's dubious Aristotelianism which alone enables him to distinguish between essential justification and its manifestation. In speaking of absolute and manifested justification, the same error is involved, viz, it is a distinction without a difference; justification is what its manifestation is, since it is a judicial declaration by definition.

Owen's problem is clear. If the two Apostles mean what they both actually say, then there is a direct conflict:

Nor can any man declare how the truth of this proposition, "Abraham was justified by works" (intending absolute justification before God), was that wherein that Scripture was fulfilled, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness," especially considering the opposition that is made both here and elsewhere between faith and works in this matter. (68)

(67) Ibid, p.392 (emphasis mine).

(68) Ibid, p.392.

The facts are that James does say that the patriarch's justification by works fulfilled Genesis 15:6. But there is another solution besides the one Owen suggests. If one assumes that Paul's comprehensive conception of faith is the true understanding of Abraham's justification, then the problem is removed, and the Apostles are reconciled, without the use of artificial semantic adjustments.

(4) Owen's fourth and final observation is concerned with James' use of the term 'works': 'As unto 'works', mentioned by both Apostles, the same works are intended, and there is no disagreement in the least about them.' (69) Owen insists that James intends 'the works of the law', since the earlier part of the chapter which occasioned the discussion of justification is concerned with the moral law. This is certainly arguable, although James does not use Paul's phrase 'works of the law' (Romans 3:28). It is equally arguable that in not following Paul's phraseology, James is implying Paul's own distinction between 'works' (or works of the law) and 'good works' (Ephesians 2:8-10). Since James speaks of the 'Genesis 22:12 obedience' as the consequence of the 'Genesis 15:6 believing', one may argue that James assumes a basic difference between works prior to faith and works subsequent to faith. In which case the relevant difference between the two Apostles is the status of the

(69) Ibid, p.394.



persons concerned. In Romans 3:28, Paul is assuming the status of an unbelieving sinner, whereas James is assuming the status of a believing man of God in the case of Abraham. The question of the believer's relationship with the law has been discussed elsewhere, but this much may be said here, that even Owen has admitted that the believer 'shall be justified....by his own....obedience'. That 'obedience' must be determined in relation to the law of God, fulfilled 'in the spirit', rather than 'in the flesh' (Romans 12:1-2; 13:8). Although believers are not justified in relation to the moral law (70), yet they are subject to its requirements (Matthew 5:20; 23:31f; I Corinthians 9:21). It is this fact which makes pardon a continuing necessity. The Apostle Paul is evidently concerned with the latter. In short, the obligation to obey the moral law has never ceased. The Gospel is opposed not to the law, but the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13).

Although Owen contradicts his own admission that the justification of believers involves their obedience when he later denies that 'evangelical works' are necessary 'unto our justification before God', he agrees that the latter view would 'easily solve this difficulty', if there was Scriptural warrant for it. (71) However, he denies that it was the Apostle Paul's doctrine, else he would have been more explicit with regard to it. It may be said,

(70) See Paul's argument in Romans 4 and Galatians 2.

(71) JF, p.379.

however, that Paul's comprehensive conception of faith, implying the constituents of trust and obedience, is saying as much, and that such a solution is reinforced by his distinction between 'works' and 'good works', as well as his continued emphasis on the believer's need for that holiness 'without which no man shall see the Lord' (Hebrews 12:14). This is not meant to imply that the believer's obedience will be perfect, any more than his trust, though it must be genuine in its degree. Neither is it valid to say that there will ever be a time when an obedient believer is beyond the need of forgiveness for the imperfection of his obedience.

Owen's exposition of James 2 rather confirms the view that the Reformed Augustinian emphasis fails to provide a satisfactory account of the textual difficulties involved. Having analysed and assessed Owen's exegesis, we must now investigate and evaluate John Wesley's account of the 'seeming repugnance' between Paul and James.

In the course of establishing a definitive understanding of their doctrines at the first Methodist Conference (1744), John Wesley and his colleagues were aware of the need to explain the teaching of James. In his first published sermon Salvation by Faith (1738), Wesley stated emphatically - with a possible eye on James 2:19 - that saving faith is to be carefully distinguished from 'the faith of a devil':

It is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. (72)

The salvation which is by such a faith, Wesley equates with justification, 'which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ ....' (73) Wesley's exposition was straightforwardly 'Pauline', hence the obvious question to be discussed at the conference was:

St. Paul says, Abraham was not justified by works; St. James, he was justified by works. Do they not contradict each other? (74)

The answer was clear and decisive. There was no contradiction:

(1) Because they do not speak of the same justification. St. Paul speaks of that justification which was when Abraham was seventy-five years old, above twenty years before Isaac was born; St. James, of that justification which was when he offered up Isaac on the altar.

(2) Because they do not speak of the same works. St. Paul speaking of works that precede faith; St. James, of works that spring from it. (75)

Wesley is clearly implying a two-fold theory of justification, and also that Paul's 'justification' is incomplete. There is no suggestion that James' 'justification' is merely 'declarative'. It is significant that Wesley seems to regard works prior to faith, and good works subsequent to faith as qualitatively different in the sight of God. Already, the difference between Wesley and Owen is apparent.

Wesley gives a more thorough statement of his views in his

(72) Works, Vol. 5, p.7.

(73) Ibid, p.9.

(74) Works, Vol. 8, p.266.

(75) Ibid, p.266.

Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament (1754). The essential position of the Minutes is maintained, but there are important additional elaborations. To compare Wesley's teaching with Owen's to maximum advantage, the pattern of Owen's discussion will be followed, highlighting the various similarities and differences.

(1) Firstly, Wesley agrees with Owen that the intentions of the two apostles are different. Although, superficially speaking, James' statements are at variance with Paul's, Wesley says that the former 'purposely' repeats Genesis 15:6 in the manner of Paul, intending only to refute those who abused Paul's teaching:

There is, therefore, no contradiction between the apostles: they both delivered the truth of God, but in a different manner, as having to do with different kinds of men. (76)

Wesley also notes that James is no more an enemy of 'faith' than Paul is of 'works':

On another occasion St. James himself pleaded the cause of faith (Acts 15:13-21); and St. Paul himself strenuously pleads for works, particularly in his later epistles. (77)

(2) Secondly, although Wesley agrees with Owen's view that Paul and James do not assume the same faith, he makes it clear that as the latter is not concerned to place true faith and works in antithesis, neither is he concerned with the mere evidencing of justification:

He does not, therefore, teach that true faith can, but that it cannot, subsist without works: nor does he oppose

(76) Op. cit., Note on James 2:14.

(77) Ibid.

faith to works; but that empty name of faith, to real faith working by love. Can that faith 'which is without works' save him? No more than it can profit his neighbour. (78)

Unlike Owen, Wesley considers that James, as well as Paul, is assuming the wider context of salvation itself; he is not merely concerned to demonstrate how a true believer manifests his justification.

(3) Thirdly, Wesley agrees with Owen that the two apostles speak of different kinds of justification. The important question is: Are the works of which James speaks relevant to 'absolute justification' before God? Owen denies that they are, since they are only relevant to the manifestation of a believer's justification. If, as has been suggested, Owen's distinction is unsound, Wesley expounds the Apostle's words by resorting to a highly unscholarly manoeuvre. Speaking of Abraham's justification, he writes:

He was justified, therefore, in St. Paul's sense (that is, accounted righteous), by faith, antecedent to his works. He was justified in St. James's sense (that is, made righteous), by works, consequent to his faith. So that St. James' justification by works is the fruit of St. Paul's justification by faith. (79)

Had the subject of James' discussion been hagiasmos, and not dikaiosis, Wesley's solution might be acceptable. His conclusion, in which he implies that sanctification is the fruit of justification, would also be indisputable. However, James, like Paul, is concerned with dikaiosis. In other words, Wesley appeals to an

(78) Ibid.

(79) Ibid.

ambiguity in Latin usage, which does not apply in Greek. Whereas the Christian Latin of the Vulgate gives weight to the Roman claim that 'to justify' means to 'make just', sanctification being included in justification, neither Greek nor Hebrew usage permits any other definition of 'justify' than to 'account just'; it is a term of ethical relationship, not ethical quality. (80) Wesley therefore fails to do full justice to what James actually says, his solution amounting to a rewriting of Scripture. His view becomes virtually indistinguishable from that of the 'evidential' school, i.e. By justification, James is simply saying that works are the fruit of true faith alone.

(4) Finally, Wesley does not share Owen's opinion regarding 'works'. Whereas Owen insists that James' usage is equivalent to Paul's - that both Apostles are speaking of 'works of the law' - Wesley distinguishes between works 'antecedent to faith' and works 'subsequent to it'. For this reason, Paul and James do not conflict. Even allowing for the ambiguity described above, Wesley comments on James 2:22 'And by works was faith made perfect' as follows:

Here St. James fixes the sense wherein he uses the word justified; so that no shadow of contradiction remains between his assertion and St. Paul's. Abraham returned from that sacrifice perfected in faith, and far higher in the favour of God. (81)

(80) See G. G. Findlay, entry under Justification, in Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, (1909), p.510.

(81) Op. cit...

The most that Wesley can claim from this verse is that Paul's comprehensive conception of faith includes what James means by faith and works, not that the Apostle means by dikaiosis something more akin to hagiasmos. It is also quite foreign to Scriptural usage to speak of degrees of divine favour; justification is a non-quantitative concept. However, it is quite consistent to suggest degrees of holiness, a thought surely implied in the idea of spiritual growth. In adopting the distinction between works before, and after, faith, Wesley has the advantage of avoiding an incoherent interpretation of James' dikaiosis. However, he fails to use this distinction to good effect by employing another distinction every bit as questionable as Owen's. In other words, Wesley's solution has little more to commend it when compared with Owen's, since, at the crucial point, he is involved in semantic modification. Both men agree, albeit in different ways, that in James' language, dikaiosis means something other than its conventional usage. Neither of them give a satisfactory exposition of James 2:24. For Owen, 'justified' means 'declaratively, not absolutely, justified', and for Wesley, it means made, not accounted, righteous'. We have yet to see a solution to the Paul-James antinomy where dikaiosis is assumed to possess the same meaning for both apostles.

The fact that Wesley is prepared to entertain a two-fold

conception of dikaiosis is probably owing to the influence of Richard Baxter. Between the 1738 definition, that 'justification implies a deliverance from guilt', and the 1754 view, that it can also mean 'made righteous', came Wesley's acquaintance with Baxter's Aphorismes (82). The resulting distinction between 'accounted righteous' and 'made righteous' is probably derived from Baxter's distinction between constitutive and sentential justification, i.e. to be constituted just is to be pardoned (initial justification) but to be sentenced as just (final justification) takes obedience into account. (83) One is inclined to say that Baxter's constant analysing prevents him from being governed by strictly Biblical considerations, a fault which he shares with Owen and others. Baxter's exegesis is at variance with the Pauline sense of justification (i.e. pardon), and Baxter does paradoxically admit that 'constitutive justification....is the sense that we are said to be justified by faith in, primarily in Scripture.'(84) Baxter hastens to make plain that, in view of the Paul-James antinomy, no man is justified by works, in any sense, 'by his works done according to the Mosaical Jewish Law as such' (85). He also emphasises that no man is justified by Tasks of Working apart from 'free grace', or 'external works' without 'Christ's spirit', and that 'no works....are acceptable to God, but what are the fruits of his

(82) Minutes of some late Conversations (1745), Works, Vol. 8, p.271.

(83) EC, p.243.

(84) Ibid, p.245.

(85) Ibid, p.248.



Spirit and grace'. (86) Even though he insists that 'we are justified by the works of Christ, as the meritorious cause of justification', yet still he affirms that the believer's 'holiness must be matter of his justification' (87). After specifically agreeing with Augustine, that conversion is included in justification, he criticises the kind of view subscribed to by John Owen:

They that say, that we must have inherent and performed righteousness, but that no man is at all justified by it, must take justifying in some particular limited sense, (which therefore they should explain by distinction) or else they speak gross contradiction: For it is no righteousness if it constitute not the owner righteous.... (88)

We have seen that Owen endeavoured to avoid this charge by distinguishing between the justification of sinners and the justification of believers, a not altogether convincing move when even he admits that, at the last, a believer will be justified 'by his own obedience'. Baxter wastes no time in exposing the weakness of the evidential justification theory:

Yea, while they make faith, repentance and holiness but signs and evidences of our right to life eternal, they thereby allow it some place in justification: For evidence hath its place in judgement.... (89)

Notwithstanding Baxter's terminological ambiguities and his inability to state the precise relationship between justification and its necessary subjective correlata as Calvin had done, one questions the approval with which Packer quotes Macleod (90) when

(86) Ibid, p.249.

(87) Ibid, p.250.

(88) Ibid, p.251.

(89) Ibid, p.251. Such evidences are moral and not physical only.

(90) Introduction to The Reformed Pastor (1974 ed.), p.10.

the latter says that 'There might be said to be in this line of things a zeal for good works and a jealousy lest Justification by Faith alone should make void the law. It looked as if in the last resort Paul must be saved from himself, and the leading doctrine of the Reformation would have to be thrown overboard.' (91)

What Baxter does in fact do is make an important observation on the consistency between Paul's attitude to works and the rest of the biblical teaching:

It seemeth strange to some, to find the whole Old Testament, and all Christ's sermons, and all the other Apostles, inculcating inherent and performed righteousness, as that which men must be judged about, to life or death, and yet to find Paul so oft pleading against Justification by Works. But if we will take the Scripture together, and not by incoherent scraps, the reconciliation is evident. (92)

Baxter then proceeds to state that Paul never meant to oppose works required by the law of grace - which he argues was in force before the Mosaic law, but only works required by 'the Jewish Law'. The 'Law of Grace' requires that men 'Believingly accept the gift of grace according to its nature, and consent by repentance to turn to God, and live a holy life in sincerity' (93). In other words, the Gospel of free grace, and justification through the merits of Christ' is not exclusive of holiness 'without which no man shall see the Lord'. As far as Baxter is concerned, the Apostle James is speaking of sentential justification:

(91) Scottish Theology, (1974 rep.), p.139.

(92) EC, p.252.

(93) Ibid, p.253.

Works of evangelical gratitude, love and obedience, according to the Law of Grace, subordinate to, and supposing redemption and the free gift of pardon and life to penitent believing acceptors, are those that Christ and James and all the Scripture make necessary to salvation; and our consent and covenant so to obey is necessary to our first or initial Justification; and our actual obedience to the continuance and confirmation of it. (94)

Whilst one can appreciate Baxter's emphasis, it would seem that his terminology of justification is defective, judged from a Pauline standpoint. Had he simply expounded James' 'justification by works and not by faith alone' to mean justification by a 'practical' or 'working' faith as he does in his exposition of James 2 (95), then his view would have been strictly Pauline. Baxter, then, is virtually Augustinian, in that he confuses sanctification with at least a secondary sense of dikaiosis. Since Wesley shared Baxter's fear of antinomianism, and the idea that James really intends 'sanctification' when he treats of 'justification', his own denial in 1746 that Paul's use of dikaiosis can be confused with 'being made actually just and righteous' (96), places him in a similar position to Baxter.

Lastly, the other 'middle-way' theologian must be considered. It has to be said, after a considerably lengthy evaluation of the various authors, that not only does Tillotson provide the most natural and convincing exposition of James 2, but he also suggests a reconciling via media where the general emphases of both Owen and Wesley

(94) Ibid, p.253.

(95) Paraphrase, (Annotations on James 2).

(96) Justification by Faith, Works, Vol. 5, p.51.

are concerned. Tillotson's solution is essentially simple; he does not attach a different meaning to James' expressions to reconcile him with Paul. Neither does he resort to a two-fold theory of justification. The key to the problem is in seeing a fundamental agreement between the two apostles over the nature of justifying faith:

St. James tells....us that the faith which justifies and saves us, must not only be a bare assent of the understanding to the truths of the Gospel; but must include in it obedience to all the commands of the Gospel, and if it does not, it does no more deserve the name of faith, than good words to a man in want, deserve the name of charity (ch. 2, v.14f). (97)

It has already been shown in chapter 3 how Tillotson proves that Paul's conception of saving faith includes obedience as well as trust. This vital observation avoids the need to employ a different meaning of 'justification' in James than is required in Paul. Dealing with James discussion of Abraham, Tillotson says:

But if Abraham were justified by works, viz, by offering up his son upon the altar, in obedience to God's command, as he says before at v.21, how was the Scripture fulfilled, which saith, that faith was imputed to him for righteousness, that is, he was justified by faith; unless faith take in the works of obedience? From whence he concludes, that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only; not by naked assent to the truth, but by such a faith as includes obedience.... (98)

When Tillotson considers other exegeses, he disqualifies them in the simplest manner. The general puritan view 'that faith

(97) Of Justifying Faith, Till. II, p.482.

(98) Ibid, p.482.

justifies the person; and works justify the faith' brings forth the reply: 'But what ground for this, when the text speaks expressly of the person being justified by works, as well as faith?' (99) Here the Archbishop 'out-does' the puritan exegetes, renowned as they were for a meticulous attention to the text of Scripture. The distinction employed 'only serves an opinion', says Tillotson, and 'at this rate a man may maintain anything, though it be never so contrary to Scripture, and elude the clearest text in the Bible.' (100) With regard to Owen's type of exegesis, Tillotson has this to say:

The other distinction which is much to the same sense, is that the Apostle doth not here speak of a real justification before God; but a declarative justification before men. But according to this, what sense can be made of v.14....can faith save him? That is, according to this explication, can faith without works save him before men? (101)

When Tillotson points out, as Wesley also was to do, that the works of which James speaks are not the same as those against which Paul writes, the final solution is as decisive as it is simple:

And this doth not contradict St. Paul, who saith, Galatians 2:16, that a man is not justified by the works of the law: but by the faith of Jesus Christ. For how does this, that we are justified not by the legal dispensation, but by the faith of the Gospel, which includes obedience and good works, contradict what St. James says, that we are not justified by a bare assent to the truth of the Gospel, but by obedience to the commands of it? And I do not see that upon the contrary supposition, viz, that the faith of the Gospel doth not include obedience in it, it is possible to reconcile these two Apostles. (102)

(99) Ibid, p.483.

(100) Ibid, p.483.

(101) Ibid, p.483.

(102) Ibid, p.483.

Since Owen denied that obedience is part of Paul's conception of faith, he was obliged to resort to these other interpretations, which Tillotson clearly invalidates. The Archbishop denies that, in his solution, the words of James 'are strained'. As for Wesley, much of his exposition leans decidedly in the direction of Tillotson's, but Baxter's influence, for all its merits in other respects, prevented him from reaching the conclusion which he was 'feeling' his way towards.

The obvious objection to Tillotson's interpretation of the Paul-James antinomy is that it seems to imply a reversion to a distinctly Roman theory of justification. As Wesley was to be accused on numerous occasions of 'popery' (103), so Tillotson was cautious to distinguish his emphasis from the Roman view:

There is a wide difference between the doctrine of the Papists about justification, and this doctrine. They say that obedience and good works are not only a condition of our justification, but a meritorious cause of it; which I abhor as much as any one. It is the doctrine of merit that the Protestants chiefly oppose in the matter of justification.... (104)

Despite Wesley's qualified assertion of 1773 that 'works are a condition (though not the meritorious cause) of final salvation' (105), Rowland Hill was still denouncing Wesley in 1777 for forsaking 'the grand protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone' in favour of 'the Popish heresy of salvation by the MERIT of works' (106).

(103) Sir Richard Hill declared that 'Popery is about the midway between Protestantism and Mr. Wesley.' See Semmel, *op. cit.*, p.86.

(104) Till. II, p.484.

(105) Works, Vol. 12, p.372.

(106) Semmel, *op. cit.*, p.86.

In the eyes of some, such a qualification was no adequate safeguard for Salvation by Grace; the very term 'condition' was odious. John Owen regarded such language as entirely inappropriate, and that 'it is not yet proved, nor ever will be, that whatever is required in them that are to be justified, is a condition whereon their justification is immediately suspended.' (107) Although Tillotson regarded gospel obedience as the causa sine qua non of final salvation, rather than a meritorious cause, his simple use of Scripture has even more persuasive power:

Does not the Bible say, that he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy? And doth not this plainly imply, that repentance is a condition of pardon? ....Doth it not say, that if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you? Can any words more plainly express a condition than these do? (108)

The 'middle-way' theologians, and Tillotson in particular, seem to provide a more satisfying exegesis of the various biblical themes in this discussion. Such an approach harmonises the otherwise conflicting theologies of Owen and Wesley once the crucial insight about Paul's comprehensive conception of faith is obtained. Even Owen's own internal contradictions are solved in this light. Without this, a considerable degree of artificial exegesis is introduced into the discussion, involving dubious metaphysical assumptions which rather confuse than clarify the issues. Even

(107) JF, p.106.

(108) The Condition of the Gospel Covenant, and the Merit of Christ, consistent, Till. I, p.488. See the conditional character of Colossians 1:23 and II Peter 1:10 and Tillotson's comments on the latter in Till. II, pp.355,359,365.

Baxter is not altogether free from this. Wesley evidently did not fully perceive the implications of his conception of faith; had he done so, he would have given a more 'natural' exegesis of James 2:24 in the manner of Tillotson, whose general emphasis he was in considerable agreement with. With all the various strands of thought duly differentiated and discussed, and affirming all the Biblical axioms of grace, including the conviction that obedience is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, one may concur with Tillotson's integrated statement that 'we cannot be said to be justified by faith alone, unless that faith include in it obedience.' (109)

It should now be possible to advance, by way of conclusion, a fully Biblical doctrine of Justification, consistent with the essential genius of the Reformation, yet with certain misconceptions eliminated which prevented the Reformation doctrine from being harmoniously biblical and self-consistent.

(109) Of the Christian Faith, which Sanctifies, Justifies and Saves, Till. II, p.475.



III

Conclusion:

Summary and Solutions

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Summary and solutions

I

The theological emphases of John Owen and John Wesley have been compared and analysed with particular reference to the doctrines of atonement and justification. This has been undertaken against the background of the theology of the Protestant Reformation, and with special consideration of the seventeenth century via media represented by Richard Baxter and Archbishop Tillotson.

The discussion would seem to demonstrate that Owen's high Calvinism and Wesley's Arminianism are, very largely, the result of theological imbalance. Whilst both men claim support for their doctrinal peculiarities in the teaching of the Bible, their conclusions can only be granted at the expense of significant textual evidence. Owen's particularism and Wesley's universalism alike are one-sided accounts of the Gospel.

If Owen's assumptions disposed him to particularise the universal character of the Gospel, Wesley was equally disposed to minimise the particularity of the divine purposes. Neither theologian seemed to acknowledge the presence of paradox in the New Testament.\* In their radically different approaches to the issues in question, the methods adopted were arguably rationalistic. High Calvinism may be styled the rationalism of the right, whereas Arminianism represents the

\*Note: Both Owen and Wesley entertained views on the doctrines of Scripture and the person of Christ involving paradox. The Bible was seen to have both divine and human authorship (in their different senses) and Christ's person consists of his divine and human natures. Neither Owen nor Wesley allowed a rationalist critique of these doctrines, whereby one aspect of the dualism was seen to be inconsistent with the other.

rationalism of the left.

Richard Baxter was concerned to expound the textual data in an integrated manner, without suppressing either the general or the particular aspects of the Gospel. In accepting the fact of paradox, he employed a dualistic hermeneutic in his theology of grace. The doctrine of the atonement was therefore viewed dualistically: it is general in provision, particular in application, both aspects being part of the divine intention. Whilst Baxter was accused of producing a theological compromise, his concern was rooted not merely in an ecumenical vision, but in a convinced theological evaluation of the issues. In this latter respect, Baxter had a precedent in John Calvin. The reformer clearly viewed the Gospel as a universal provision of grace, notwithstanding the fact of divine election. This scheme was reflected in his view of the atonement and Christ's intercession. Both were universal in provision, yet special in application. Such a position is therefore historic 'Calvinism'.

Calvin's dualistic conception of the Gospel is evident in his exposition of the will of God, and the operations of divine grace, as well as in the atonement. As with the atonement, with its general and particular aspects, so the will of God is divided into his secret, absolute will and his revealed, conditional will. Likewise, Calvin sees a correlation in the doctrine of grace; it is both common and special. Calvin acknowledges an element of

mystery in viewing the revelation of the triune God in this manner, but he clearly refused to dispense with the mystery, as both Arminian and high Calvinist rationalism effectively did. There can be little doubt about the biblical basis for Calvin's overall position. (See Deuteronomy 29:29; Matthew 22:14; I Timothy 4:10.) J. I. Packer is therefore incorrect to suggest that the high Calvinist view represents what Calvin would have said had he faced the Arminian thesis. It is equally valid to argue, as Amyraut did, that Calvin would not have altered his view of the atonement.(1) Indeed, if Calvin was happy with the Tridentine view of the atonement, why might he have been reluctant to accept the Arminian view? In other words, the Westminster Confession and Owen's Death of Death represent a policy of 'over-kill' in their rejection of Arminianism.

Owen's high Calvinism is significantly different from Calvin's theology. The difference is explained chiefly in terms of the re-emergence of Aristotelian scholasticism within Reformed theology following Calvin's death (1564). Theodore Beza established a rationalistic framework, according to which the atonement was seen as strictly limited. Although the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619) represents a transitional position on the atonement, the Canons tend to reflect the influence of Beza, a process which reached its culmination in the formularies of the Westminster Assembly (1642-1646). By the time Owen was writing The Display of Arminianism (1643),

(1) See Amyraut's Defense De La Doctrine De Calvin (1644).

deduction had replaced induction in theological method, and theory had taken precedence over data.

With the dualistic balance of Reformation theology effectively gone, it was predictable that Arminianism should emerge as a reactionary movement. However, the protest was primarily directed against Bezan high Calvinism, rather than the biblical theology of Calvin. Thus, high Calvinism and Arminianism became deviations from Calvinism proper (see Diagram 1.), creating a theological rift from which Protestantism has never recovered. According to this assessment of the issues, the traditional 'Calvinist versus Arminian' confrontation, personified by Owen and Wesley, demands redefinition. Both Owen and Wesley are, albeit from opposing perspectives, 'semi-Calvinists'.

Although Owen taught election as Calvin had done, Wesley's view of the extent of the atonement coincided with Calvin's numerous statements on the subject. As has been pointed out, Calvin would not take issue with the universalism of Charles Wesley's hymns:

See all your sins on Jesus laid:  
The Lamb of God was slain.  
His soul was once an offering made  
For every soul of man. (2)

Calvin's precise position vis-a-vis the atonement has obvious implications for the remaining 'four points' of Calvinism. Although he taught 'total depravity', Calvin admits a carefully defined concept

(2) M.H.B. (1933), 1, v.6.

of free will (as does the Westminster Confession, Chapter IX). His chief contention is that a man's volitions are free from compulsion, but ultimately conditioned by his nature. Man is thus a willing slave to sin. The grace of regeneration is necessary to enable man to choose and act aright. Calvin clearly taught 'unconditional election' but he equally insisted that election is only known indirectly. Christ is the 'mirror' of election. Therefore without faith in Christ, and a godly life, no man can learn of his election. If election itself is ultimately unconditional, knowledge of it is conditional.

It is doubtful whether Calvin would have acquiesced in the idea of 'irresistible grace'. His view of free will forbids any overtones of determinism. 'Efficacious grace', an expression which even John Owen preferred, would describe Calvin's thought. Furthermore, his common grace - special grace dualism suggests that whilst special grace is ultimately efficacious in the elect, common grace is resistible. Lastly, Calvin was clearly committed to the 'final perseverance of the saints'. However, only the elect will finally persevere to the end, and knowledge of election is only indirect. The doctrine of perseverance is only an encouragement to those who, by living a godly life, are 'giving diligence to make their calling and election sure' (II Peter 1:10). In short, Calvin's actual theology in these areas contains an antidote to the abuses of the very system which has incorrectly been attributed to him.

The activities of Amyraut on the continent, and Richard Baxter in this country are thus to be seen as attempts to synthesise the valid emphases in both Arminianism and high Calvinism. Thus Amyraldianism alias Baxterianism perpetuated in great measure the original theological insights of John Calvin. Although the dualistic logic of Ramus is evident in Amyraldianism, this does not necessarily imply that aristotelianism was simply replaced by another scholastic system. The dualism evident in Amyraldian theology suggests an earlier influence, even that of Calvin himself.

Whilst it has frequently been pointed out that 'Baxterianism' often degenerated into Arminianism, Socinianism, and eventually Deism and Atheism, a complementary process has often passed unnoticed. From Calvin's Calvinism there has occurred a transition to high Calvinism, hypercalvinism and eventually philosophical determinism and atheism, the two extremes arriving at the same terminus (Diagram 2). Whilst the fact of paradox demands that the general and particular aspects of the Gospel be kept 'entwined', rationalism has been responsible for a 'disentangling' of these complementary rather than antithetical 'strands'. Thus, high Calvinism and Arminianism both, in their different ways, destroyed the synthesis of the New Testament.

It cannot be denied that, from the verdict of history, the pursuit of the 'middle-way' has proved more than problematic. Once the pressures of rationalism had exerted themselves, in either

direction, theological degeneration usually gathered momentum.

In 1692, the high Calvinist Robert Traill observed 'Such men, that are for middle-ways in points of doctrine have a greater kindness for that extreme they go halfway to, than for that they go half-way from.' (3) However, Traill's description of what frequently happened to Baxterians has equal application for those who, departing from Arminianism, may be drawn beyond Calvinism to hypercalvinism. The hazard is arguably relevant to both tendencies.

J. I. Packer has endorsed Owen's own belief that his defence of the doctrine of limited atonement is irrefutable. Now, since the cogency of any closely reasoned argument depends upon both the consistency of the deductive process and the validity of the premises, Packer and Owen's case may only be granted if these factors apply. However, it has been argued in this thesis that the very assumptions on which Owen's case rests are questionable. Not only is Owen's thesis at variance with the Reformation position; it also conflicts with the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture. The doctrine of limited atonement has no prima facie evidence to support it, i.e. there is not one statement in the New Testament remotely similar to the proposition 'Christ died for the elect alone.' Such data would be necessary for Owen's case, in view of the numerous texts Wesley and the Arminians can appeal to.

Even though high Calvinists would wish to contest these issues,

(3) Vindication of the Protestant Doctrine of Justification (1692), Works (1810), Vol. 1, p.253.



Owen's theory of the nature of the atonement presents them with greater difficulties. The Puritan divine's entire case ultimately depends upon the commercial theory of the atonement, viz, Christ's sufferings were commensurate with the sins of the elect, for whose debts he made satisfaction. Such a quantitative concept of sin has been rejected, even by those who would claim to share Owen's general outlook, e.g. Andrew Fuller, R. L. Dabney, Charles Hodge, Thomas Chalmers and others. By an excessive use of commercial metaphors, Owen loses sight of the fact that sin is to be viewed qualitatively. Accordingly, the sufferings of Christ are to be seen as a qualitative substitution for the sin of the human race. The question of extent becomes therefore conceptually irrelevant, as far as the nature of the atonement is concerned. The dualistic view insists that, since the covenant of grace is a universal, conditional covenant, the atonement was designed both to be universally sufficient in provision, though restricted in application. By its very nature, the atonement is applicable to one or an infinite number of individuals. It is thus a sufficient ransom for all, but efficient for the elect. It has been shown that Owen's discussion of the concept of sufficiency actually evacuates it of any real redemptive significance. His quantitative view amounts to saying that the atonement is only sufficient for whom it is efficient. He effectively dispensed with the time honoured formula - 'sufficient for all, efficient for the

elect'.

Whilst the dualistic position sees a general as well as a particular aspect in the design of the atonement, Owen insisted that there is only 'one end' in the death of Christ. It has been shown that, at this point, Owen was more influenced by the teleology of Aristotle's Ethics than by the language of the New Testament. The influence of Aristotle emerges more significantly in the course of Owen's commercialist discussion of the precise payment of Christ's satisfaction. Owen argued that Christ, by his sufferings, paid the same penalty as that deserved by the elect. Therefore, if the atonement was universal, and any suffer eternally, then sin is being punished twice. Following Hugo Grotius, Baxter rejected Owen's argument. In his view, the death of Christ was not the exact payment - solutio ejusdem, demanded by the Law, but an equivalent compensation - solutio tantidem. Since the Law makes no provision for accepting the sufferings of a substitute in the place of the offender, so, properly speaking, Christ's sufferings satisfied the Law-giver. God therefore waived the exact penal demands of the Law in the punishment of Christ. Christ did not suffer the identical punishment due to anyone, since eternal punishment is threatened to sinners. Unlike those punished eternally, Christ's sufferings were terminated by his resurrection. In short, he only 'tasted' death for everyman (Hebrews 2:9). He was thus a substitute for all in

that human sin was the cause of his death. In demanding satisfaction for sin, God the Father relaxed the Law with regard to both the persons suffering (a point which Owen agrees with), and the sufferings to be borne. Christ and his sufferings were substituted for the sufferings deserved by sinners. Christ therefore paid, not the idem, but the tantundem. The nature of Christ's sufferings, coupled with the infinite dignity of the sufferer, provided God the Father with an acceptable compensation, in view of which, pardon could be offered to mankind in the covenant of grace. Those who rejected the Gospel would thus pay the idem, as the punishment threatened to them. Therefore, contrary to Owen's thesis, the punishment deserved by sin was not duplicated.

It was crucial for Owen to prove that, since the elect were threatened with the idem, so Christ paid the idem. Whilst even Owen had to admit the obvious differences between Christ's sufferings and those threatened to sinners, he employed Aristotle's metaphysical substance-accidents theory to argue that there was a substantial, if not an accidental sameness. This incoherent theory attempts to disguise real differences by asserting a meaningless idea of sameness where it does not exist. If the criticism of Aristotle's distinction advanced in this study is valid, then the entire case for the theory of limited atonement collapses. Even William Cunningham failed to see the significance of this issue,

advocating an alternative solution to Owen's which was virtually indistinguishable from Baxter's. Whilst numerous theologians have expressed dissatisfaction with Owen's commercialism, it is humbly suggested that the above criticism is an original contribution to the debate. It is surely of considerable significance that Owen's scholastic defence of the doctrine of limited atonement has a parallel in the dubious Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Both ideas derive their ultimate validity from Aristotle's metaphysics. Without this, neither idea can claim support.

Although several features of the Governmental theory of the atonement vitiate the teaching of the New Testament, Grotius' contribution is not to be entirely discounted. Given a commercialist context, the idem - tantundem distinction clarifies issues at an important point in the debate. It shows why a strictly quantitative and commercialist doctrine of satisfaction is invalid, although the utilitarian framework of the governmental idea tended to detract from this. Baxter's early acquiescence in the theory of Grotius was not perpetuated in its entirety. Although the secular, utilitarian aspects became less prominent, Baxter continued to use Grotius' view to combat Owen's commercialism. However, in an age when Aristotle still held sway, Baxter was unable to conclusively invalidate Owen's position.

In view of these debates, it would seem that a satisfactory theory of the atonement depends upon an eclectic approach. The strictly commercialist version of Anselm's satisfaction theory and the utilitarian features of Grotius' Governmental theory alike lead to anomalous conclusions. The Ethical theory advocated by A. H. Strong (4), incorporating an Amyraldian view of the extent of the atonement, seems to express a satisfactory view. Strong expounds a qualitative view of sin and satisfaction, arguing on ethical (rather than either commercial or political) assumptions, a synthesis of the most satisfactory elements in the other theories. The reality of propitiation, and the integrity of the divine government are thereby secured.

With regard to consistency, Owen had a further difficulty. His particularist thesis logically excluded the doctrine of common grace. The Death of Death argues a strictly limited procurement of grace for the elect, a very different conclusion from Calvin's. Yet, as we have seen, Owen did teach common grace, in the style of Baxter. Therefore, it has been argued that Owen has to either discard his theory of limited atonement in favour of Baxter's view, or repudiate his doctrine of common grace. Owen is thus involved in a fundamental inconsistency. It is surely significant that the hypercalvinists of the eighteenth century did reject the idea of common grace in the interests of limited atonement. Furthermore,

(4) Systematic Theology (1890), pp.409f.

whilst Owen, again unlike the hypercalvinists, did teach free offers of grace, he could not justify his belief in the light of his particularism. With regard to evangelism, his thesis logically committed his hearers to discovering if they were elect before claiming the benefits of the atonement. Experiential signs were necessary prerequisites for those who might believe the promises of the gospel. Sinners dare not 'look to Christ' before they 'looked within'. (5) Thus, a good deal of puritan piety became unhealthily introspective as the seekers of salvation searched for a subjective warrant to receive Christ. Such a position had obvious ramifications where the doctrine of assurance was concerned.

Despite all that Owen says to the contrary, Arminian evangelicalism was arguably more healthy at this point. Whilst Wesley was anxious to avoid spurious conversions, he still believed that the warrant to believe the gospel was 'in' the message itself, and not 'in' the hearer. The proclamation of 'Christ died for you' is thus antecedent to any subjective impressions. The gospel produces the response, and the order (which Owen seems to reverse) is important:

He speaks, and, listening to his voice,  
New life the dead receive:  
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,  
The humble poor believe. (6)

It is interesting that Wesley is more in accord with Calvin here, who always taught that the response of faith occurs in the

(5) See 'To the Reader', DD, p.154.

(6) M.H.B. (1933), 1, v.4.

context of a universal atonement. Although, in Wesley's case, Owen was right to say that 'the opinion of the universalists....evidently opposeth God's free grace of election' (7), his criticism does not apply to Calvin's understanding of the gospel.

A final consideration concerning Owen's consistency relates to the punishment of those who reject the gospel. Owen fails to demonstrate the justice of punishing the unbeliever for rejecting Christ if Christ was not given for him. It must be admitted that, from the standpoint of election, the fact of paradox appears here in its most acute form. However, from the perspective of the conditional will of God, a significant component of the unbeliever's guilt is related to his rejection of the divine provision. That a general provision of grace is basic to the gospel is the raison d'etre of evangelism.

Baxter was correct to argue that the church could not base its evangelistic programme on the doctrine of limited atonement, and we have seen how Owen unsuccessfully attempts to extricate himself from this difficulty. Packer has no more success either. He denies that the extent of the atonement has any bearing on 'the content of the evangelistic message' since 'the object of saving faith is....not, strictly speaking, the atonement, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who made the atonement' (8). This is surely question begging. Does not the apostle Paul speak of 'faith in his blood'?

(7) 'To the Reader', DD, p.154.

(8) Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (1961), p.66.

(Romans 3:25) If sinners are directed to Christ, are they not directed to a once-crucified Christ? Can men be called to Christ, and yet not to Christ the redeemer? To say 'Yes' is to employ a distinction without a difference.

In comparison with all that has gone before, Wesley's exposition of the atonement is refreshingly a-scholastic. He deliberately ignored the controversies which were typical of the seventeenth century. Whilst he constantly stressed the substitutionary and propitiatory nature of the atonement, he was little concerned with the finer points of the Anselmic and Grotian theories. Considerations of election apart, Wesley's exposition of the issues reflects more the anti-scholastic atmosphere of the Protestant Reformation. Whilst Owen's treatment of divine election is more in accord with the theology of the reformers, Wesley's account of the gospel as a revelation of grace to all mankind captures more satisfactorily than Owen's does the uninhibited outlook of the reformers. Overall, it seems correct to conclude that the Baxterian via media, perpetuating as it did the balanced theology of John Calvin, represents a more satisfactory exposition of the subject than either Owen or Wesley could provide. Although Baxter hoped that his position might prove a basis for conciliation, his hopes were unfulfilled. One wonders whether a greater awareness of Calvin's precise views on the extent of the atonement during the seventeenth and eighteenth



centuries might have taken some of the heat out of the Arminian - Calvinist controversy. Both Owen and Wesley appear to have been totally unaware of Calvin's views, although Wesley, in his controversies with George Whitefield and Rowland Hill, was quick to appeal to the universalism of the Anglican reformers. Had matters been otherwise with regard to Calvin, the course of the controversy would surely have been different. This is not to suggest that Calvin should have been invested with quasi-papal authority, for the genius of Protestantism is its appeal not to human, but to divine authority. However, it is being suggested that, on biblical grounds, the theological ground Calvin actually occupied, rather than what he was thought to occupy, provides a meeting place for those who, despite their extreme differences, are committed to a theology of grace.

## II

It has been demonstrated that Owen and Wesley reach very different conclusions with regard to certain aspects of the doctrine of justification. In the broadest sense, they agree that justification is all of grace and that the merits of Christ alone constitute the basis of the sinner's acceptance before God. However, differences of interpretation in the key areas of imputation, faith and good works, led to significant differences of opinion.

Basic to Owen's view of justification was his theory of imputation. He taught that the righteousness of Christ (both passive and active) was imputed to the believer as his sole righteousness in the sight of God. Justification is therefore more than mere pardon; it is also acceptance. Faith is not only 'assent', but 'trust'. The psychology of faith embraced 'head' and 'heart'. Owen regarded justification as a once-for-all, completed event, followed by the process of sanctification. Good works were necessary, but non-meritorious fruits of a justifying faith, and merely evidential as far as justification was concerned. Despite his stress on the necessity of good works, Owen was accused of an incipient antinomianism. He was challenged with the question, 'Since Christ's active righteousness is imputed to the believer, what necessity is there in the believer's own obedience?' In other words, if the believer is holy in Christ, why does he himself need to be holy? Owen's answer is arguably unsatisfactory. Good works could appear almost contingent, and even optional. He denies that the believer's obedience can relate to his justification, since this calls into question the adequacy of Christ's righteousness. Since Owen does urge the necessity of good works for sanctification, he is not therefore antinomian. However, his theory of imputation involves an anomaly. In view of Christ's passive and active righteousness, Owen teaches that, in justification, we are delivered not

only from 'the curse of the law', but also from the obligation to obey it. However, for sanctification, the law becomes the believer's rule of life. In other words, Owen is antinomian in his conception of justification, but not in his view of sanctification. The antinomians argued that the believer is totally delivered from any obligation to the law, both in justification and sanctification. Therefore, in their view, Owen's idea of sanctification was a return to legalism. It has been shown that the gospel is opposed, not to the law itself, but only to the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). The obligation to obey the law itself is perpetual, as is the gospel remedy for violations of the law. As has been shown, Owen's arguments for the necessity of holiness do not possess sufficient cogency to counteract the antinomian tendencies evident in his account of justification. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that Owen's case for the imputed active righteousness of Christ (traceable to Theodore Beza), is without Scriptural foundation, and that his teaching at this point is the ultimate source of the anomalies in his position. In short, the teaching of both Calvin and Piscator is very different from Owen's, and more coherently Scriptural.

Central to the entire debate is the theory of a two-fold justification, and the apparent contradiction between the apostles Paul and James. Those who rejected the antinomian tendencies of

Owen's view appealed to the teaching of James 2:24, where the apostle seems to assert the doctrine of justification by works. Owen admitted that James 2:24 appeared to conflict with Paul's theology in Romans 3:28, but he insisted that they could be harmonised. In Owen's view, Paul was concerned with the justification of sinners before God, whereas James was concerned with the justification of believers before men. For James, works were thus public evidences of a believer's faith, not meritorious acts in the sight of God.

Owen's primary reason for denying that James is using dikaiosis in the manner of Paul, is the once-for-all character of justification. As with his discussion of the atonement, Owen again employs Aristotle's substance-accidents theory to explain that justification is one in its essence, but two-fold in its manifestation. Justification is essentially complete, but only initially manifest, at conversion. Its final manifestation occurs at the day of judgement. It has been shown that Owen's discussion is self-contradictory at this point, and that Aristotle's conceptual framework is the chief source of the confusion.

If the aforementioned criticism of Aristotle is valid (9), then Owen has to either admit one manifested justification, or two manifested justifications. The first option denies any real significance to the day of judgement, and the second lacks explicit scriptural

(9) Apart from its accidents (or manifestations), no meaning can be attached to the 'essence' of a thing. The 'accidents' are the thing, i.e. the manifestation of justification is justification itself. Therefore a two-fold manifestation of justification is a two-fold justification. See the detailed discussion of this issue on pp.215f and pp.472f.

evidence. Either way, Owen's hermeneutic is suspect.

Owen attempts to evade the charge of antinomianism by resorting to this two-fold manifestation of justification: sinners are justified through Christ's righteousness imputed to them, but believers (now possessing the status of justified sinners) are justified by their own obedience or inherent righteousness. Owen does not even relate this secondary justification to the teaching of James. He insists that he speaks of justification before God, not men. Therefore, from the standpoint of his pre-conversion state, the sinner requires both the righteousness of Christ and an inherent righteousness of his own, in order to be justified completely in the sight of God. This view is hardly distinguishable from the very view Owen is anxious to refute. In short, it is remarkable to discover that, contrary to his 'official' rejection of the theory of a two-fold justification, Owen virtually capitulates by conceding that the believer shall, by his own 'personal obedience....be declared righteous at the last day, and without it none shall be....justified.' (10) Owen's secondary reason for 'officially' rejecting a two-fold justification was that it detracted from the believer's assurance. But his alternative version is arguably open to the same objection. Furthermore, even Owen's concession seems to call in question the adequacy of Christ's active righteousness, and therefore his theory of

(10) JF, pp.159-160.

imputation.

John Wesley's theology of justification underwent a number of re-assessments and modifications during his career. Immediately after his evangelical conversion of 1738, his outlook may be described as strictly 'Lutheran', or more accurately, that of the Protestant reformers generally, i.e. the merits of Christ were the sole basis of man's acceptance before God, received by faith alone; 'Justification' signifies 'the pardon of sin' and good works were the evidences of a 'lively faith'. These are the themes of Wesley's first published sermon Salvation by Faith (1738). Faced with a rising tide of both Calvinistic and Moravian antinomianism in the 1740's, Wesley revised his concept of sola fide. A significant influence was Richard Baxter's Aphorismes of Justification, which Wesley read in 1745. In Wesley's sermon Justification by Faith (1746), Baxter's theory of a two-fold justification is evident. Also, Wesley defined faith more comprehensively. 'Faith' was more than trust. 'Love' and 'obedience' were no longer the consequences of faith, they were, together with 'trust', the ingredients of faith. In this sense, good works were as essential to salvation as trust in the merits of Christ was. In addition, Wesley no longer regarded assurance to be of the essence of faith. Like John Owen, he believed the reformers had erred at that point.

Wesley therefore came to see that both Christ's merits or

righteousness and the believer's own inherent righteousness were necessary for final justification and salvation. Justification, therefore, was not a complete, once-for-all, event. Whilst Wesley's stress on the necessity of sanctification was timely and scriptural, his doctrine of perfection was an aberration which tended to discredit this emphasis.

Wesley believed that the theory of Christ's active righteousness imputed was the root cause of antinomianism. He believed that Christ's passive righteousness only was imputed, and that 'justification' was to be viewed strictly as 'pardon of sin'. He defended his position by appealing, not only to the teaching of the Anglican reformers, but also to the views of John Calvin, who seemed to view 'justification', 'pardon' and 'imputed righteousness' as synonymous expressions. In his sermon, The Lord our Righteousness (1765), Wesley actually quotes Calvin. This thesis has demonstrated the justice of Wesley's position vis-a-vis Calvin, whose teaching was made more explicit by John Fischer (Piscator). Wesley therefore denied that 'pardon' and 'acceptance' were to be distinguished, as if Christ's passive righteousness was necessary for the former, and his active righteousness was necessary to secure the latter. 'Acceptance' is the immediate and logically necessary consequence of 'pardon'. However, the believer's final acceptance depends as much on imparted righteousness as it does on Christ's imputed

righteousness. Wesley believed that the Paul-James antinomy was to be solved in this light and that, taken together, Romans 3:28 and James 2:24 teach a two-fold justification before God. Owen rightly rejects such a dualism (which implies that Paul's 'justification' is inadequate), although he virtually concedes what he 'officially' rejects.

Whilst Wesley was right to appeal to Calvin and the other reformers in his definition of justification, his acquiescence in Baxter's teaching involved a secondary concept of justification at variance with Reformation theology. As far as Owen's theory of imputation was concerned, Baxter's theology has more in common with the reformers, but his doctrine of second justification is partly explained by pre-Reformation influences. Baxter's difficulties, (which Owen arguably shared?) were thus transmitted to Wesley, who never really achieved a satisfactory understanding of the doctrine of justification.

It is not being suggested that Reformation theology is normative and reliable at every point, although, in the main, it appears to be eminently scriptural.

With regard to the Paul-James antinomy, it has been argued that even Calvin established a questionable precedent in attributing to Paul and James different concepts of dikaiosis. More consistently, Archbishop Tillotson argues that, in matters relating to the



work of grace, dikaiosis always means pardon, even in James 2:24. On this assumption, Tillotson seems to reconcile Paul and James in the most consistent manner, without sacrificing or suppressing any aspect of the discussion. For him, the key to solving all the exegetical problems lies in the nature of faith.

According to Tillotson, 'faith' has a triple character. Its constituents are assent, trust and obedience. Baxter shared this view, and despite his early antipathy towards Tillotson, so did Wesley in his 'post-Lutheran' development. Even more vigorously than Baxter, Tillotson worked out the implications of Calvin's doctrine of Christ's three-fold office of prophet, priest and king. Justifying faith receives Christ in all his offices. Therefore, to assent to the truth and promises of the gospel is to acknowledge Christ as prophet; to trust in his merits alone is to rely upon him as priest; and to obey his commands is to submit to him as king. Accordingly, each constituent of faith relates to the corresponding office in Christ's work. It is therefore impossible for anyone to regard himself as a true believer, who does not possess a faith with this comprehensive character. This conception of faith can be confirmed from the standpoint of the believer's psychology. When a person believes, the whole person believes - mind, heart and will. In short, a whole person receives a whole Christ with a whole faith. A 1:1:1 relationship exists between the constituents of the believing

'soul', the faith whereby he believes and the Christ who is believed in. (See Diagram 3) On this model, it is impossible to be saved unless trust both presupposes assent, and anticipates obedience. This is what Baxter meant when he said that there is no justification by a partial faith. Such a faith implies a partial acceptance of Christ. Owen refused to regard obedience as an ingredient of faith because in his view, justifying faith only had reference to Christ's priestly office.

Like Baxter, Tillotson believed that Owen's theory of imputation tended to antinomianism, but he did not, for all their similarities, resort to Baxter's version of dual-justification to safeguard the necessity of holiness. Whereas Baxter and Wesley argue for an initial justification without works, and the second justification with works, Tillotson, much in the manner of Calvin, stresses that justification is a continuum, repeatable throughout life on the same terms on which it is initiated. The meritorious ground is always the finished work of Christ, but equally, the subjective condition is always such a faith as Tillotson pleads for. This applies at conversion, and at any subsequent point in a believer's experience. The model that suggests that at conversion, faith initiates salvation, and obedience is the consequence of faith, is therefore inadequate. Whether at conversion or subsequently, 'trust' is ever accompanied by 'obedience'. A constant correlation



In James 2:24, justification is by works as well as by faith, i.e.

$$J_J \rightarrow F_J \cdot W_J \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

Now, (1) is contradicted by (2) unless

$$J_P \neq J_J \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

$$F_P \neq F_J \dots\dots\dots(4)$$

$$W_P \neq W_J \dots\dots\dots(5)$$

(where '≠' = 'is not equal to')

It has been argued in the analysis that (4) and (5) apply, i.e. Paul rejects the 'works of the law' ( $W_P$ ), whereas James affirms the 'works of faith' ( $W_J$ ). Paul assumes an active faith ( $F_P$ ), and James rejects an inactive faith ( $F_J$ ). However, it has been argued that (3) does not apply, i.e. James and Paul share a common understanding of 'justification'. (11)

As far as (4) is concerned, the textual data suggests that

$$F_P = f_a \cdot f_t \cdot f_o \dots\dots\dots(6)$$

Where ' $f_a$ ' = 'assent'; ' $f_t$ ' = 'trust'; and ' $f_o$ ' = 'obedience'.

Alternatively, James is arguing against an incomplete, and therefore, 'false' faith, i.e. he clearly teaches that 'assent' and 'trust' are necessary, but not sufficient in isolation from 'obedience', to qualify as true faith.

Therefore, by 'faith only', James means:

$$F_J = f_a \cdot f_t \dots\dots\dots(7)$$

Now, if

$$J_P \rightarrow (f_a \cdot f_t \cdot f_o) \cdot \sim W_P \dots\dots\dots(8)$$

And if

$$J_J \rightarrow (f_a \cdot f_t) \cdot W_J \cdot \sim W_P \dots\dots\dots(9)$$

Then, if ' $f_o$ ' = ' $W_J$ ', therefore

$$J_P = J_J \dots\dots\dots(10)$$

- (11) Paul's denunciation of 'legal righteousness' arguably arises from the following considerations:
  - (a) Any degree of obedience can never compensate for instances of disobedience.
  - (b) It is a man's duty to obey God's law, and there is nothing meritorious about doing one's duty.
  - (c) Without the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, the natural man cannot begin to render true obedience to God.

(See Romans 4:4 and Luke 17:10.)

It emerges more clearly that while Paul is chiefly concerned in Romans with the meritorious basis of justification, James is focusing attention on the nature of that faith which is justifying. In this respect, he confirms what Paul takes for granted, viz, justifying faith is an obedient faith, a 'faith which worketh by love' (Galatians 5:6). James 2:20,22,24 may be paraphrased thus:

A 'faith' without the commitment implied by obedience is not a living, saving faith....In Abraham's case, 'obedience' was added to his 'assent' and 'trust' to prove that his faith was complete....So then by an obedient faith a man is justified, and not by mere 'assent' and 'trust'.

It would be incorrect to characterise Tillotson's position as 'justification by good works', as Wesley at one time implied. It would be just as incorrect to call it 'justification by assent'. Tillotson's point is that there is more to faith than 'trust'. Since the whole man believes, his faith must possess rational, emotional and volitional features. Neither does Tillotson detract from the death of Christ as the sole meritorious ground of justification, by stressing faith as its subjective sine qua non. After all, justification is by faith.

By viewing faith in this integrated manner, Tillotson, more successfully than Owen, Baxter and Wesley, was able to avoid the idea of a two-fold justification. Justification is therefore a continuum, encompassing initial, continuing and final justification at 'the last day'. Neither obedience, nor trust, nor assent are its

meritorious ground. However, none can claim the merits of Christ without possessing a persevering, integrated faith. Assurance will never be a problem for the diligent believer, whose spirituality is perpetually viewed in terms of Christ's triple offices of prophet, priest and king.

Notwithstanding Calvin's refusal to attribute to Paul and James the same understanding of dikaiosis, Tillotson's exposition of James 2:24 correlates closely with Calvin's overall view of justification, especially with regard to the implications of Christ's three-fold office.

A number of residual problems are solved as a result of this discussion. Paul's almost unique doctrine of justification is correctly assessed. It has been argued that 'justification by faith' is the very heart of the Christian gospel. What then of the writings of John and Peter, where Paul's terminology is not employed? Are their epistles deficient for not speaking of 'justification'? As has been demonstrated in this thesis, 'justification' is equivalent to 'pardon' or 'forgiveness'. In this respect, Peter and John expound 'justification' as surely as Paul did. Furthermore, as well as Christ's reference to 'justification' in Luke 18:4, the Lord's prayer teaches the doctrine of justification in the petition for forgiveness (Matthew 6:12). ( One might add that Christ's use of dikaiosis in Luke 18:4

parallels Paul's thought in Romans, where the issue of merit is central, whilst his statement in Matthew 12:37 ('by thy words thou shalt be justified') reflects the same emphasis as James.) In other words, Paul's theology in Romans and Galatians is merely the simple message of forgiveness clothed in the language of the law court. To argue a once-for-all justification from Romans is to fail to grasp the legal context which Paul assumes. If the accused is acquitted, then all current charges brought against him are dropped. However, his acquittal is no license for subsequent crimes. On being discharged, he is on probation, and must live circumspectly. Should he break the law again, a further trial will be necessary. He will not protest his innocence, but plead 'guilty', i.e. there must be repentance. In other words, according to Paul's forensic analogies, believers 'go to court daily', for daily forgiveness, even if the 'judge' is seated on the 'throne of grace'. Paul is simply saying that whenever justification occurs, it is always by 'grace through faith'. The use of the aorist in Romans 5:1 merely proves that when pardon is sought, the particular sins being confessed are completely pardoned. The finished work of Christ is the perpetual meritorious ground of pardon, which is repeatedly appealed to for the believer's daily needs.

It may also be asked, why does Paul stress justification by faith in Romans, when apostolic practice in the Book of Acts couples

faith with repentance? Some have even suggested that repentance should be given the same status as faith in justification, and therefore Paul's terminology in Romans is deficient. This matter is easily solved once the triple constituent view of faith is considered. 'Repentance' is the same genus as 'obedience'. Since sin involves the rejection of Christ's kingly authority, so repentance from sin implies submission to Christ. Since faith in Christ embraces his kingly office, so 'faith' includes 'repentance'. Paul allows for this when he speaks of 'the obedience of faith' (Romans 1:5; 16:26). 'Repentance', like 'trust', is not performed once and for all. The life of faith implies a perpetual exercise of faith, which further implies a constant correlation of the constituents of faith.

It has been shown that the usual Reformed account of the ordo salutis views justification as a once-for-all event, and sanctification as the subsequent process. Unlike later reformed theologians, Calvin did not think in these terms, and no separate discussion of sanctification occurs in his Institutes. It is surely significant that the Apostle Paul does not include sanctification as a separate item in his summary of the ordo salutis in Romans 8:30, 'predestination....calling....justification....glorification'. It is now clear why this is the case. In view of his conception of faith, where 'obedience' is comprehended in



it, the idea of sanctification is thereby included. This is not to equate justification with sanctification, but to see 'pardon' and 'obedience' as constant correlates in the believer's experience, even from the very beginning. Since, as has been demonstrated, 'pardon' or 'justification' is repeatable, it is correct to view both 'sanctification and justification as a process without identifying them as medieval theology did. (11) J. A. T. Robinson was therefore right to conclude that 'Justification and sanctification, indeed like all the great words for salvation, are both past, present and future - an act accomplished, a process being worked out, a consummation yet awaited.' (12) Robinson suggests a further reason why the 'justification-sanctification' model is inappropriate. To adopt it is to fail to see the equivalence of two sets of metaphorical ideas.(13) As surely as 'justification' has a meaning in a forensic context, so 'sanctification' has meaning in an Old Testament ceremonial context. In the former, 'justification' correlates with 'obedience', and in the latter, 'washing' or 'purification' correlates with 'service'. These are two different metaphorical ways of expressing the one truth that being pardoned by Christ leads to discipleship. 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.' (John 8:11) In other words, as the epistle to the Romans is the gospel of forgiveness clothed in legal language, so the epistle to the Hebrews is the same gospel clothed in

(11) Unlike the Reformers, who viewed 'justification' as 'pardon', the medieval theologians defined it in terms of 'infused grace'. They therefore reduced it to 'sanctification', obliterating the necessary distinction between objective and subjective grace. Although the two necessarily correlate, they are not to be confused.

(12) Wrestling with Romans, (1979), pp. 49-50.

(13) This view makes sense of 1 Corinthians 6:11. '....But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus....' It might be argued that sanctification precedes justification here. However, Paul probably sees them as synonymous terms expressing the fact of acceptance with God.

ceremonial language. It is perfectly valid to suggest that had Romans and Galatians never been written, then the Protestant Reformation would have witnessed the rediscovery of the doctrine of sanctification by faith. (14)

Having completed this analysis of the theology of John Owen and John Wesley, it seems correct to conclude that the Baxter-Tillotson via media presents a coherent alternative to the extreme positions of our other theologians. An attempt to clarify the various issues has been made from an exegetical standpoint. However, it is suggested that the findings of this study meet the need for that ameliorated Calvinism pleaded for by Alan Sell (15). This writer is surely right to conclude that the controversies associated with Calvinism and Arminianism are no longer central to theological debate (16). The contemporary scene suggests that other concerns are more pressing. However, there are those who are persuaded that the various insights of the Reformed tradition are still relevant in the late twentieth century. The fact remains that whenever Christianity is properly defined within the context of its historic, authoritative documents, the questions this thesis has attempted to answer will be asked. Although such questions no longer seem to occupy the attention of theologians generally, Sell is surely right to observe that they have not been 'solved, but

(14) Acts 15:9 has an obvious bearing on this thought, where Peter speaks of being 'purified by faith' (pistei katharisas). See also Hebrews 1:3.

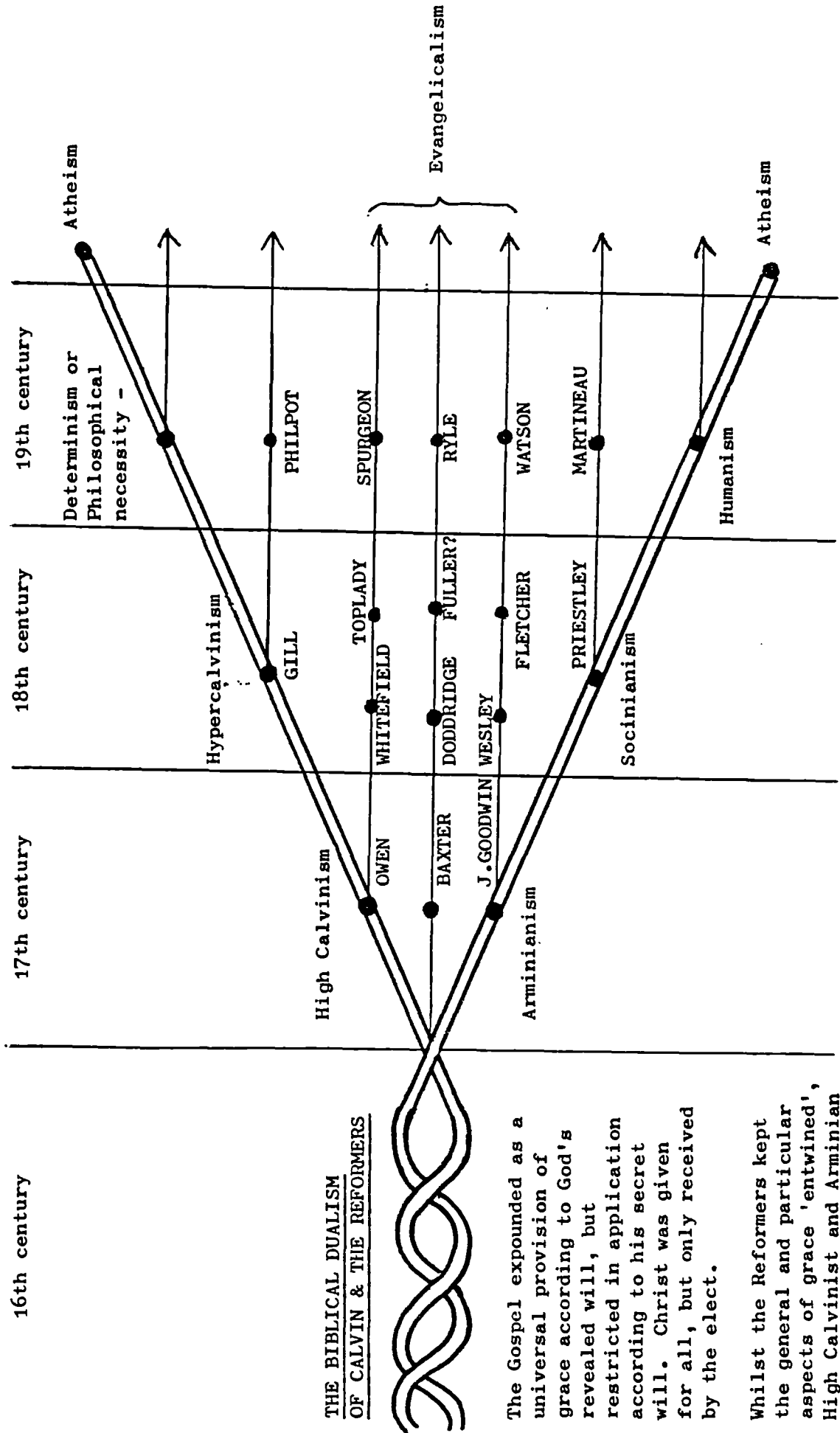
(15) The Great Debate (1982), p.98.

(16) Ibid, pp.94,135.

only shelved'. He therefore pleads for a renewed concern for 'doctrinal clarity, provided it could be fostered without acrimony'. In his view, it would be 'a refreshing change from that neutralism and relativism into which so much recent theology has fallen' (17). To this end, it is hoped that the present thesis will prove a useful contribution and a stimulus to further research.

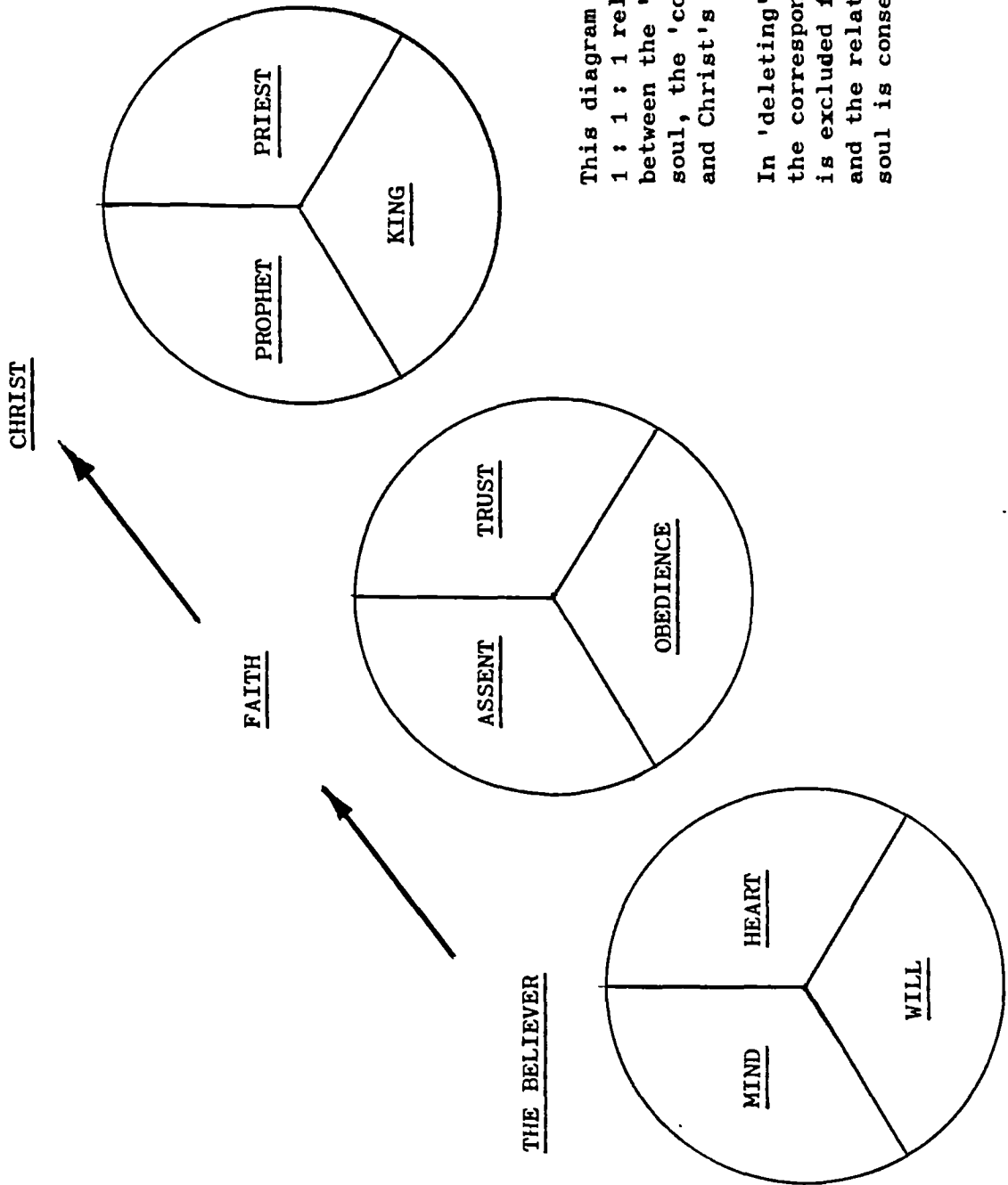
(17) Ibid, p.95.





The Gospel expounded as a universal provision of grace according to God's revealed will, but restricted in application according to his secret will. Christ was given for all, but only received by the elect.

Whilst the Reformers kept the general and particular aspects of grace 'entwined', High Calvinist and Arminian rationalism 'separated' them. The main lines indicate the progressive nature of rationalistic tendencies.



This diagram illustrates how a 1 : 1 : 1 relationship exists between the 'faculties' of the soul, the 'components' of faith and Christ's three-fold offices.

In 'deleting' any aspect of faith, the corresponding office of Christ is excluded from his saving work, and the related faculty of the soul is consequently inactive.

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