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Thomas Goodwin and the puritan doctrine of assurance : continuity and discontinuity in the reformed tradition, 1600-1680

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Thomas Goodwin
and the Puritan Doctrine of Assurance:

Continuity and Discontinuity in the Reformed Tradition, 1600-1680

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THESIS

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Table of Contents

Chapter One pp 1-56
"To Reform the Reformation It Self" Thomas Goodwin and the Pastoral Context

Goodwin's personal and pastoral history, the context of the assurance question, the nature of Puritanism, hypocrisy, anxiety

Chapter Two pp 57-99
Predestination and Anxiety In The Matter of Assurance

Predestinarian views among English Puritans generally, Goodwin's christocentric approach to the divine decree, the *sylogismus practicus*, Goodwin's use of the syllogism, the *sylogismus mysticus*

Chapter Three pp 100-139
"The Due Administration" of Divine Grace Federalism and Conditionality

Federalism a new invention?, Goodwin and federal theology, the Covenant of Redemption, the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace, Covenant and Cross, Covenant and Conditionality, Goodwin's place in the absolute-conditional debate

Chapter Four pp. 140-177
The Essence of Saving Faith

The elements and seat of faith, faith and assurance, passive or active?

Chapter Five pp 178-209
The Objects and Acts of Justifying Faith

Part One The Object of Justifying faith, God's merciful nature, God's merciful will, God as revealed in Christ, Christ as offered in the Covenant of Grace, Justification *remissio* or *iustitia*?, Part Two: The Acts of Faith; general vs special faith, faith as instrument, not object or basis

Chapter Six
Conversion Viewed from the Divine Perspective

pp 210-226

The nature of regeneration, conversion, “the errors of some protestants”

Chapter Seven
The Application of Redemption

pp 227-257

Part One The Difficulty of Faith, contrary to reason, contrary to conscience, contrary to will, Part Two The Necessity of Faith, receiving Christ, using endeavours to believe

Chapter Eight
“Make Your Calling and Election Sure” The Uneasy Tension Between the *Syllogismus Practicus* and the *Syllogismus Mysticus*

pp 258-295

Faith is less than full assurance, more than assent, assurance is possible, how assurance may be obtained, Law, Gospel, and the Christian conscience, the glory of the gospel, making one’s calling and election sure, flattery or friendship,

Chapter Nine
“Without All Preparation”
Goodwin and the Controversy Concerning Preparationism

pp. 296-328

Understanding ‘preparationism’, endeavours to believe: same idea?, sanctification before justification?

Chapter Ten
Assurance, Temporary Faith, and the Perseverance of Justifying Faith

pp 329-363

Temporary faith, faith and perseverance, falling short of faith, obedience and perseverance, the friendship of God

Chapter Eleven

pp 364-398

The Gathered Church and the Means of Grace

Part One The Church, the rightly defined church; the rightly ordered church, membership, discipline, Part Two The Sacraments, sacramental grace vs predestinating grace?, Baptism, the Supper

Chapter Twelve

pp 399-444

Thomas Goodwin and the Reformed Tradition.

Conclusions Concerning Continuity

Federalism, predestination, faith and assurance, preparationism, church and sacraments

Chapter One

“To Reform the Reformation It Self”. Thomas Goodwin & The Pastoral Context

It was shortly after receiving his Master of Arts degree at Cambridge that Goodwin was converted, by his own report, recorded by his son Goodwin's conversion gives us remarkable insight into the spiritual condition of the early seventeenth century and William Haller cites it as “worthy in its way to be compared to the most notable self-revelations of the Puritan soul”¹

Born on the 5th of October, 1600 in the Norfolk village of Rolesby and reared in Yarmouth, the eldest son of Richard and Catherine Goodwin came to Christ's College, Cambridge in 1613, at twelve years old, where he learned the Heidelberg Catechism and Ursinus' Commentary It was also a time when the Dutch church was in convulsions over the Arminian controversy With the memory of Perkins, deceased ten years, lingering in everyone's minds, Richard Sibbes--Perkins's successor--was preaching at Trinity Church, and his famous sermons attracted those who were dissatisfied with the embellished rhetoric of others Most notable among them was Dr Senhouse, an Arminian orator² At fourteen, Goodwin eagerly anticipated Easter, when he would receive his first Communion and he prepared earnestly for it by attending Sibbes' lectures and reading Calvin's *Institutes* (“and O how sweet was the reading of some Parts of that Book to me!”)³ In addition, he had many fine examples of godly and learned tutors As Whitsunday approached, Goodwin felt, “I should be so confirm'd that I should never fall away,” but much to his surprise and embarrassment, he was too young Alas, when the day arrived, his tutor kindly kept him from receiving the Supper⁴

Feeling rejected, the boy stopped attending Sibbes' sermons and lectures, ceased praying and reading Scripture, and instead became what he calls “profane” At this point, Goodwin was

content to become successful in the world, and as far as God was concerned, Goodwin would “let him keep Heaven to himself” This did not mean that he would pursue a secular career, as a preacher, he would merely become a popular orator, flattering his auditors with witty and brilliant reflections He therefore exchanged the sermons of Sibbes for those of Senhouse⁵ Goodwin began to study the art and rhetoric of the other preachers, who cared more for style than substance He was not so interested in a life of drunken debauchery as a life of worldly fame But one afternoon, as Thomas met with some friends to “make merry,” he heard a bell ring for a funeral, and one of the friends convinced the group to go in to hear the sermon Reluctantly, Thomas followed and the sermon was on repentance Goodwin became convicted that he stood at that moment under the Law, and it was that date that he recorded with special fondness, October 2, 1620⁶ Even after six years at Cambridge, Goodwin acknowledges that he had not truly understood the Gospel It was when he suddenly realized that it was not just his great sins, nor indeed even his sinful actions at all, but his sinful condition, that was at the root of his guilt and judgment, that Goodwin was converted As Freer describes it, “That truth which he took so long to see he was subsequently able to use to devastate those who denied the imputation of both Adam’s sin and Christ’s righteousness”⁷ Sibbes advised Goodwin, “Young man, if you ever would do good, you must preach the gospel and the free grace of God in Christ Jesus”⁸ This counsel must have profoundly affected Goodwin, for it became the heart-beat of the Independent divine throughout his illustrious ministry

These conversion stories became very popular during this period, especially when people had similar experiences It was comforting to a person struggling for assurance to hear about someone going through the same difficulties, coming home at last No wonder Goodwin’s sermon, *A Childe of Light* (1636) could be regarded by some as having a rather autobiographical motive, as one interpreter summarizes Goodwin’s point “You are children of light, even in the dark”⁹

Goodwin placed himself under the ministry of Dr John Preston at Trinity Church, Cambridge, but nevertheless reports, "I was diverted from Christ several yeares, to search only into the signs of grace in me. It was almost seven years ere I was taken off to live by faith on Christ, and on God's free love, which are alike the object of faith"¹⁰ As his own conversion narrative attests, Goodwin was typical of a generation of Puritans who had emphasized the intricacies in detecting the differences between the works of nature and those of supernatural grace. Thus, there seem to have been four stages in Goodwin's spiritual formation. His early Cambridge years, up to the time when he was denied Communion, were marked by a generally Reformed theological stance but, according to his record, without genuine conversion. The next phase consisted of a general, nominal Christianity that could be worn lightly, while worldly pleasure and ambition reigned. This period was followed by the marked conversion experience following the funeral sermon and led to a period of approximately six years of coming to terms with his guilt. But this phase itself was followed by a diversion from his own inner state to Christ's external righteousness. It was in this phase that the Independent divine continued throughout the rest of his ministry.

Upon John Preston's death in 1628, Goodwin succeeded the man who himself had received the post from Richard Sibbes, who in turn had followed William Perkins. Thus, Goodwin was the last in a series of famous and formative Puritan divines who occupied the prestigious Cambridge post. Just as his preaching was enjoying great success in Cambridge, Goodwin was forced to flee Laud's "purge" in 1634 and he pastored an independent church in Arnhem, The Netherlands, from 1639 to 1641. It was here where Goodwin exchanged reflections concerning the most pressing doctrinal and pastoral problems of the period and, no doubt, he realized very quickly that the latter were generational rather than geographical, that is, the Dutch "puritans" were engaged in the same program, with largely the same emphases, as the English. Known as the *Nadere Reformatie*, this "Second Reformation" in the Low Countries paralleled the Puritan experieent

and both influenced each other. The English Puritan William Ames, author of the influential *Marrow of Theology*, had already built an Anglo-Dutch bridge for the puritan-pietists, but Thomas Goodwin contributed greatly to the synthesis of Dutch and English experimental and ecclesiological reflection. The orthodox Dutch Calvinists looked askance at pietists such as Voetius and Ames much as some Calvinistic clergy in the English establishment viewed the Puritans with a certain degree of suspicion. In Holland, there was a great deal more freedom to pursue “experiments,” and Goodwin found abundant opportunities to explore the “Congregational Way,” knowing that independency was not a popular view even among the Puritans at home.

In 1641, with Laud out of the way and the Puritans in power, Goodwin returned and pastored a prominent independent church in London, but his chief contribution was made at the Westminster Assembly, which he attended as a divine. Second only to John Owen in prominence within the Independent party of the Puritan establishment, Goodwin is said to have been, of all Preston’s disciples, “the most decisive figure and the great disturber of the Westminster Assembly.”¹¹ The Independents at Westminster were Goodwin’s colleagues in Dutch exile: Philip Nye, William Bridge, Joseph Caryl, William Greenhill, Sydrach Simpson. The five “Dissenting Brethren” included Goodwin, Nye, Simpson, Bridge, Burroughs, and they presented to Westminster Assembly their “Apologetical Narration” (1644). In it, we catch a glimpse of Goodwin’s differences with his fellow Westminster divines. The Reformed churches were spent on reformation of doctrine, not of discipline.

Yet the Practicall part, the power of godlinesse and the profession thereof, with difference from carnall and formall Christians, had not been advanced and held forth among them, as in this our owne Island, as themselves have generally acknowledged. We had the advantage of all that light which the conflicts of our owne Divines (the good old Non-conformists) had struck forth in their times, And the draughts of Discipline which they had drawn, which we found not in all things the very same with the practices of the Reformed Churches.¹²

Goodwin explains that in Holland, “we found the judgement of many of our godly learned

brethren in the Ministry (that desired a general reformation) to differ from ours in some things, wherein we do professedly judge the Calvinian Reformed Churches of the first reformation from out of popery, to stand in need of a further reformation themselves,"¹³ a pietist's criticism of the Dutch Church that parallels the Puritan criticisms of the English Church as well. But still, Goodwin notices no differences in doctrine (other than ecclesiology) between the conformists and nonconformists.

However, Goodwin's most controversial work centered on his activities as a Westminster divine. In the Minutes of the Westminster Assembly (1643-52), we find Thomas Goodwin's name appearing more often than even some of the most famous of the divines.¹⁴ As one of the Five Dissenting Brethren to have presented the *Apologetical Narration*, Goodwin defended Independency and the "Congregational Way" to an Assembly that regularly wondered if it had experienced a leave of its senses when it appointed Independents to the Assembly.¹⁵ Goodwin, in fact, was made a member of a standing committee and was given full freedom to defend his views during the seemingly endless debates over polity and liturgy.¹⁶ Even the irascible Presbyterian Robert Baillie found it difficult to resist Goodwin's charms. While the Westminster Directory was being compiled, Baillie and Goodwin seem to have found accord on the character of Puritan liturgy. However, Baillie was disturbed by the Independent practice of weekly Communion, even though this was Calvin's intention for the Reformed churches. Baillie wrote

The Independents way of celebration, seems to be very irreverent. They have the communion every Sabbath, without any preparation before or thanksgiving after, little examination of people, their very prayers and doctrine before the sacrament uses not to be directed to the use of the sacrament. They have, after the blessing, a short discourse, and two short graces over the elements, which are distribute and participate in silence, without exhortation, reading, or singing, and all is ended with a psalme, without prayer.¹⁷

In a later letter, Baillie complained that the Independents insufficiently prepared catechetically and liturgically for Communion or concluded with grateful response. Nor did they come forward to the Table to receive the bread and wine, but remained in their seats. "Yet all this, with God's help, we have carryed over their bellies to our practice"¹⁸

It was Goodwin's pastoral services, along with four other clergymen, that were offered to King Charles upon his execution, but the king, rather understandably, refused their assistance¹⁹. On June 7, 1649, both Goodwin and Owen preached before the House of Commons and the next day the House put their names forward for promotion to the presidency of two Oxford colleges, in 1650, Goodwin became president of Magdalen College, Oxford, while Owen soon became dean of Christ Church and vice-chancellor of the University. The pair must have had considerable influence, since Cromwell gave over his powers as Chancellor to a commission headed by Owen. At his post, Goodwin was made a close adviser to Cromwell and the protector's Oxford Commissioner. It was of this period that even Lord Clarendon later pronounced, "The University of Oxford yielded a harvest of extraordinary good and sound knowledge in all parts of learning"²⁰. Goodwin was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1653.

On Oct 14, 1658, Goodwin led a delegation to present the Savoy Declaration of Independent beliefs to Richard Cromwell. With the Rump Parliament restored in 1659 the Presbyterian state-church too was restored, but one year later, with the support of many Presbyterians as well as Anglicans, Charles II landed at Dover on May 25. Despite assurances to the contrary, the new king enacted strict acts of conformity and between 1660 and 62, two thousand ministers were

ejected²¹ However, when the Plague left London bereft of pastors, Goodwin took up his Independent post unmolested in 1660 until his own death in 1679

Goodwin is a key link between the Elizabethan Puritans and the Westminster divines, and his own concerns point up what he sees as the growing dangers of introspective piety within Puritan circles. This pastoral problem was the motivation for his penning *Christ Set Forth in His Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Sitting at God's right hand, Intercession, As the Cause of Justification, and Object of Justifying Faith Upon Rom 8 Ver 34 Together With A Treatise Discovering The Affectionate tenderness of Christ's Heart now in Heaven, unto Sinners on Earth*²² In other words, Goodwin thought it was time that the pendulum swung back in the direction of objectivity and the Reformation insistence on salvation *propter Christum per fide*. It is Christ outside of us, "set forth" in his offices and acts, rather than Christ within us, felt and experienced and evidenced in his graces, that concerns this Independent Puritan most during this hour. It is not that the subjective element is missing in the slightest, nor is it that Goodwin is prepared to make this the sole focus at every time and place (cf his work on the Holy Spirit, which we shall consider). But, like the reformers, he sees the chief pastoral problem at this moment as a subjective introspection of inner piety that has obscured objective inspection of Christ's saving person and work. By Goodwin's time, the pastoral problems in England were once again similar to those faced by the first reformers, only now experienced in devoutly Protestant circles.

In his preface, Goodwin writes, "I have by long experience observed many holy and precious souls, who have clearly and wholly given up themselves to Christ, to be saved by him his own way, and who at their first conversion (as also at times of desertion) have made an entire and immediate close with Christ alone for their justification, who yet in the ordinary course and way of the spirits

have been too much carried away with the rudiments of Christ in their own hearts, and not after Christ himself”²³ They are more concentrated upon “searching into the gracious dispositions of their own hearts, so to bring down, or to raise up (as the apostle’s words are, Rom x 8), and so get a sight of Christ by them Whereas Christ himself is ‘nigh them’ (as the apostle there speaks), if they would but nakedly look upon himself through thought of pure and single faith”²⁴

Note that Goodwin is not arguing that a confusion of justification and sanctification was common, suggesting a doctrinal shift, rather, he is observing a tendency of Christians to trust in Christ alone for their justification, but then live by looking within themselves Whether this separation of faith (looking to Christ alone) and assurance (gathered from evidences) explicitly required such a dilemma will be discussed in another place Furthermore, Goodwin, when referring to “graces” within us, is not thinking of the works of the unregenerate, but the work of the Spirit in the hearts of his people They are, properly speaking, his graces, nevertheless, even these are, at the end of the day, insufficient for providing maturity and comfort in doubt

And although the use of our own graces, by way of sign and evidence of Christ in us, be allowed us by God, and is no way derogatory from Christ, if subordinated to faith, and so as that the heart be not too inordinate and immoderate in poring too long or too much on them, so an immoderate recourse unto signs is unwarrantable, when thereby we are diverted and taken off from a more constant actual exercise of daily thoughts of faith toward Christ immediately, as he is set forth to be our righteousness, either by the way of assurance (which is a kind of enjoyment of him) or recumbency and renewed adherence in pursuit after him ²⁵

Tragically, this was not characteristic of Puritan piety by the 1630’s and ‘40’s, as Goodwin observes “The minds of many are so wholly taken up with their own hearts, that Christ ‘is scarce in all their thoughts”²⁶ Therefore, it is necessary to say directly, “Christ is the object of faith, *in opposition to our own humiliation, or graces, or duties* We are not to trust, nor rest in humiliation, as many do, who quiet their consciences from this, that they have been troubled”²⁷

(emphasis added) Rather, it is the taking of Christ, not the degree of one's humiliation and sorrow, that is to be the aim of the Christian, whether upon first "closing with Christ" or in all subsequent exercises of faith "I have come to this pass now," Goodwin told a fellow minister, "that signs will do me no good alone, I have trusted too much to habitual grace for assurance of justification, I tell you Christ is worth all "28 How close this is to Calvin's remark, "If Pighius asks how I know I am elect, I answer that Christ is more than a thousand testimonies to me "29 Goodwin demonstrates that being a "high Calvinist," with its strict federalism and belief in particular redemption, does not preclude, but in fact requires, a central emphasis on looking directly to Christ the Mediator Those who emphasize discontinuity between Calvin and the Puritans and point to limited atonement as a barrier to looking directly to Christ have to explain why the Puritans themselves (the "spiritual brotherhood," Owen, Goodwin) argued for a direct act of "looking unto Christ onely "30

While not denying any widely accepted Puritan tenet, Goodwin was concerned that the pendulum had swung too far toward *habitus* again The so-called "Law-work" or "humiliation," as it was called, had become for some a Protestant penitential rite and one could not be entirely certain when one had finally made it through this passage Goodwin's concerns appear to have some justification beyond his own observations

While there is a danger in trying to find "the shift" in the thinking of key Puritans during the early seventeenth century (1625-45), there are some very important changes taking place Anthony Burgess insisted, "A man may as lawfully join Saints and Angels in his mediation with Christ, as graces " After all, the problem with the former is that it adds something to Christ. "Dost thou the like when thou joinest thy love and grace with Christ's obedience"31 The fact that Burgess, a Westminster divine, senses the need to express himself in this manner demonstrates that Goodwin and Owen were not alone in their concerns 32 Were there tendencies toward an introspective piety

that sought graces not merely as consequent evidences of justification, but as meritorious conditions and causes?

R T Kendall points out that Arthur Hildersam (1563-1632), lecturer at Christ's College, Cambridge, was convinced, before 1625, of an essentially "Calvinian" understanding of faith and assurance "The faith of God's elect is no vaine fancy nor uncertain hope, but a certain assurance wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God" and justifying faith is being "certainly and undoubtedly perswaded, that Christ and all his merits doe belong unto him hee may bee in this life certainly assured, that he shall be saved " God gave us a Covenant of Grace "and promised eternall life upon condition of Faith, and not of workes " However, the "later Hildersam" (after 1625) writes that "A full perswasion and certaine assurance" is to be shunned³³ While one is certainly not forced to conclude from this (as Kendall does) that the Puritans are departing from Calvin's system suddenly at or around the year 1625, there is certainly a marked shift in emphasis, from viewing assurance as part of the essence of faith and then insisting that a full enjoyment of these pleasures is unreasonable to expect

We shall argue that while the discontinuities have been greatly exaggerated, a shift in emphasis is apparent and Goodwin appears to be among those concerned about it during these productive and vital decades By 1658, John Owen, who eventually came to overtake Goodwin in influence, could explain his motive for writing his classic work on sin and temptation in terms of "an observation of some men's dangerous mistakes, who of late days have taken upon them to give directions for the mortification of sin, who, being unacquainted with the mystery of the gospel and the efficacy of the death of Christ, have anew imposed the yoke of a self-wrought-out mortification on the necks of their disciples, which neither they nor their forefathers were ever able to bear " And the product is inevitable and abundantly evidenced "superstition, self-righteousness, and anxiety of conscience in them who take up the burden which is so bound for them " In short, Owen wishes to remind them that they are in a "covenant of grace "³⁴ In fact, the motives for

Owen's treatment of sin and temptation seem to have paralleled Goodwin's, in his treatise, *Christ Set Forth*. Francis Tallents tried to explain to Baxter the attraction of Antinomianism, the latter utterly mystified by the motivation "A great fault has been for about twenty years, to incline to neglect Christ under the pretence of exalting reason and goodness"³⁵

In spite of the heavy emphasis on uprooting sin from the human heart, the Puritans were disappointed at the widespread evils of their day. Owen lamented how temptations have succeeded in bringing "unspeakable scandal" upon the gospel, "with the wounding and ruin of innumerable souls."³⁶ Yet, Owen's concerns for evangelical holiness did not lead him into a moralistic direction, the Gospel is the only answer to the sin and temptation experienced by Christians after their conversion every bit as much as before and upon it. A greater concern for Owen, as for Goodwin, was Arminian legalism and a growing dominance of moralistic preaching that did not require Christ as anything more than a moral example. "The very name or expression of 'preaching Christ' is become a term of reproach and contempt, nor can some, as they say, understand what is meant thereby, unless it be an engine to drive all rational preaching, and so all morality and honesty, out of the world."³⁷

It was within this historical context that Thomas Goodwin wrote, counseled, pastored, and lectured. Far from being anything other than a Puritan, Goodwin is nevertheless illustrative of the fact that any attempt to reduce the movement to simple categories and predictable answers will surely miss the diversity of a movement that was full of vitality, creative reflection, and, not least of all, change. In order to properly treat the Puritan doctrine of assurance, as especially formulated by Goodwin, we must place the Independent divine in his historical-theological context. To do this, we shall begin with the Reformation and attempt to define the Puritan movement.

The Context of The Assurance Question

Assurance was not possible, according to the Council of Trent, “except by special revelation,” in exceptional cases. Since justification was considered a process of conversion, one could not conclude absolutely that he or she was destined for salvation without partaking of presumption and spiritual pride.

For Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, Martyr, Calvin, Zanchi, Melancthon, Bullinger, and the rest of the first and second generation reformers, the pastoral context was very clear and the priorities unambiguous. Through print, pulpit, worship, and popular discourse, the challenge was to bring assurance of God’s favor to those who were being told that such assurance was presumptuous and arrogant, an unreasonable expectation. But the pastoral context changes with the third generation of reformers. It is not primarily geographical (Rhineland, Genevan, Scottish, English, Dutch), but generational, and there is definitely a discernable shift--not in theology, but in the pastoral context. In order to buttress the Protestant emphasis on assurance belonging to every believer, the first and second generation reformers had insisted upon assurance being part of the very essence and definition of faith. In order to truly possess Christ, one had to possess true faith, which consisted of *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*.³⁸ To truly trust in Christ was to be persuaded that one’s sins were forgiven and that one now stood before God vindicated because of the work of the Mediator, and to deny that assurance was of the essence of faith was to accommodate to the basic conviction of Trent, that assurance was not the privilege of the believer. If one could not be assured, surely this would imply an insufficiency on the part of Christ. If the gospel is sufficient, then assurance belongs to every believer, the reformers insisted.³⁹

The pastoral situation in England at the turn of the seventeenth century, as in other Protestant lands, was different from that faced by the first reformers. Two principal problems characterize the pastoral context in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century: “hypocrisy” (presumption) and anxiety about the possession of saving faith. However, before we can even address the pastoral situation, it is necessary to challenge some assumptions concerning the Puritans and their relationship to the larger Church.

Puritanism As A Reformist Protestantism

Hugh Trevor-Roper represents a fairly typical High Church interpretation of Puritan historiography. Opposed to the rather up-start Puritanism was Arminianism, which was not an innovation, but “an intellectual movement which had a well-established pedigree in England, which appealed to humane and liberal men.” Further, “In the reign of James I, the Church of England had pretensions to be an ecumenical Church, a third force, competing with the international Church of Rome and international Calvinism.” Laud had exploited and distorted this Arminian tradition whose antecedents are traced by Trevor-Roper as though these urbane Erasmians--branded by Puritans with the label “Socinian” for their rationalism, had been meeting underground through the entire conflagration with Rome. With no use for either Trent or Dordt, these sophisticates patiently waited for destiny, which happened to be the Restoration.⁴⁰

First, this very popular interpretation forces one into a false dilemma between Puritans (i.e., “anti-Arminians”) and “humane and liberal men.” That caricature fails on two counts. First, not all Puritans, as we shall see below, were anti-Arminian and not many Elizabethan or even Jacobean ecclesiastical leaders were sympathetic to the Arminian creed, however vigorous their opposition

to Puritanism. It fails also because “human and liberal men” were not, as a rule, set in contrast to the Puritans, they often were the Puritans--erudite, sophisticated, and broadly as well as religiously educated in the humanities and arts.

This popular interpretation also fails in its assertion that James I sought to create an ecumenical Church that navigated between the Scylla and Charybdis of international Romanism and international Calvinism. Ever since Cranmer, aside from the interruption of Mary's reign, the Church of England had been intimately connected with the cause of the international Reformed movement, demonstrated in the Marian exile and the dependence of the Elizabethan clergy on their continental hosts, and also by James himself, who not only sent a delegation to Dordt, but insisted on it as an opportunity for the international Reformed churches to put down the Arminian heresy.

Due in large measure to the thorough research of Patrick Collinson, there has been a new appreciation for the breadth and diversity within the Puritan movement itself.⁴¹ No longer can it be regarded as a monolithic column of Calvinistic dissent in contrast to an Erasmian-Arminian Church. Below we shall pursue these lines of argument in an effort to demonstrate, for the particular purposes of this thesis, the Puritan context.

It is quite misleading to distinguish the Puritan from the Conformist in the late sixteenth century, because most of the “godly ministers” who had opened the way for the later Nonconformists were, in fact, moderately conformist themselves. Nevertheless, as long as we realize that this distinction marks a later break, it may be useful. First, the Conformists were not Arminians, in contrast to Puritan Non-conformity. In the late sixteenth century, Ursinus'

Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism was Oxford's theological textbook⁴² Furthermore, in 1563, one year before Calvin's death, Alexander Nowell(1507-1602), dean of St Paul's, drafted a catechism on the Thirty-Nine Articles that underscored the Reformed theology underlying the Articles In fact, references to Calvin are replete and the dependence on the Genevan reformer in particular is quite evident The Catechism was approved by Convocation in 1562 and went through its first edition in 1570, followed by reprints in 1571, 1574, and 1576 Nowell's Catechism, in fact, was the only officially approved catechism and was required for instruction by ministers, tutors, and schoolmasters and given a "minor official status" subservient to the Articles themselves⁴³ However, one of the best sources for discovering the relationship between the Conformists and the Puritans is found in the correspondence between the leading Elizabethan bishops and their former hosts in Zurich during the exile⁴⁴ On April 28, 1559, Bishop Jewel assured Peter Martyr Vermigli, whose own labors at Oxford as a professor under Edward gave him a special interest in English affairs, " we have exhibited to the queen all our articles of religion and doctrine, and have not departed in the slightest degree from the confession of Zurich"⁴⁵ In fact, the Elizabethan Church accepted the Helvetic Confession⁴⁶

Jewel wrote to Bullinger (May 22, 1559), "Religion is again placed on the same footing on which it stood in king Edward's time, to which event, I doubt not, but that your own letters and exhortations, and those of your republic, have powerfully contributed " Nevertheless, "Our universities are so depressed and ruined, that at Oxford there are scarcely two individuals who think with us " There is "so much desolation" in "such a short time" under Mary's reign that Jewel does not even recommend that Zurich should send students until things improve markedly⁴⁷ In

November of that same year, Jewel complained in a letter to Martyr that “no care whatever is taken for the encouragement of literature and the due succession of learned men”⁴⁸ One wonders why the Erasmian scholars of Queen Mary’s day represent such an exception to the excellence of the Universities before and after her reign. Mainly due to the war with France, “Our universities, and more especially Oxford, are sadly deserted, without learning, without lectures, without any regard to religion” (May 22, 1560)⁴⁹ Things must have improved considerably by 1573, when English clergy are writing to Zurich to inform them that it is now safe to send their children to Oxford, “with many good tutors” in place.⁵⁰ The Elizabethan bishops were hardly proto-latitudinarians of a *via media* between Geneva and Rome (unless, indeed, Zurich was such a middle way, a notion which should not carry a high degree of plausibility), that triumph would have to wait for Laud. In correspondence with Zurich regarding certain persisting ceremonies, the Elizabethan bishops expressed outrage that Reformed clergy must lead services before a crucifix and candles in the queen’s chapel. And yet, Bullinger and Martyr cautioned against sudden moves, and finally the queen acceded to her clergy’s protests. The crucifix was removed, but the clergy had to accept the vestments.⁵¹ With the exception of surplices, Jewel assured Martyr, the English “do not differ from your doctrine by a nail’s breadth.”⁵²

But that was not enough. The Elizabethan clergy were just as intent as the later “puritans” on purging the liturgy from “vayne ceremonies” and it was, oddly enough, the calm-headed counsel of Bullinger, Martyr, and other Zurich hosts that gave Elizabeth’s clergy the confidence to conform in “things indifferent.” Bullinger himself replied to Bishop Horn (Nov 3, 1565), “I approve of the zeal of those persons who would have the church purged from all the dregs of popery. On the other

hand, I also commend your prudence, who do not think that churches are to be forsaken because of the vestments ” He warns that such disputes will serve only to further the schemes of the papists, anabaptists and Lutherans But open debate of the issues should be allowed ⁵³ In another letter (May 1, 1566), Bullinger gives point-by-point advice There is nothing wrong with the command to wear vestments and to conform in other details, appealing to useful arguments from Peter Martyr ⁵⁴ Approving even of the demand for conformity, Bullinger stated, “I answer, that I by no means approve the additions of new ceremonies, but yet I am not prepared to deny that some may lawfully be instituted, provided the worship of God is not made to consist in them, and they are appointed only for the sake of order and discipline Christ himself observed the feast or ceremony of dedication, though we do not read that this feast was prescribed in the law ”⁵⁵ The queen could command such ceremonies and vestments as a purely civil command, so long as it was not regarded as divinely ordained for true worship One wonders how much of this line of reasoning shaped the Elizabethan Settlement, reaching its zenith in Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*--the very Settlement that would become the thorn in the side of the Nonconformists

In correspondence dated August 15, 1573, Bishop Sandys of London complained to Bullinger of “puritans ” “New orators are rising up from among us, foolish young men,” he writes, “who while they despise authority, and admit of no superior, are seeking the complete overthrow and rooting up of our whole ecclesiastical polity,” listing their issues

1) “The civil magistrate has no authority in religious matters”, 2) only presbyterian government is scriptural, 3) all titles and offices not found in scripture must be abolished, 4) “Each parish should have its own presbytery”, 5) “The choice of the ministers belongs to the people”, 6) The bishops and cathedrals should give up their “lands, revenues, titles, honours,” etc , 7) “No one should be allowed to preach who is not a pastor of some congregation, and he ought to preach to his own flock exclusively, and no where else”, 8) “The infants of papists are not to be baptised”, 9) “The judicial laws of Moses are binding upon Christian princes, and they ought not in the slightest

degree to depart from them ”⁵⁶

Here we find, at least from one perspective, an authoritative definition of “puritan” in the late sixteenth century. Essentially, a “puritan” is a member of the Church of England with presbyterian sympathies (influenced by Thomas Cartwright, ejected from Cambridge) and a disdain for ceremonies or practices that are not directly commanded by Scripture. Bishop Cox of Ely wrote also to Zurich (Feb 3, 1574), informing the Reformed brethren that Archbishop Whitgift, quite happily to the author’s mind, was driving these “puritans” out. The presbyterians, led by Cartwright, sent a delegation to Geneva and Zurich for support, explaining the harassment they endured at the hands of the formerly exiled guests of Geneva, Strasbourg and Zurich. Rodolph Gualter, in whose home John Parkhurst had been a guest for four years, dispatched a letter to the latter, now a bishop, sharply rebuking him for making such an issue of things indifferent. This letter seems to have fallen into the hands of the presbyterians, who made the most of it, but there was no support from Bullinger. Instead, Bishop Cox and others were still writing to Bullinger into the mid-70s as one who was on their side in the dispute.⁵⁷ In fact, Bishop Sandys thanked Bullinger for his advice throughout the difficulties, acknowledging, “I see and embrace it,” concluding, “But I hope that this new fabric of new discipline will shortly fall in pieces by its own weight, since it appears that many of our own countrymen who formerly admired it, are now grown weary of it.” (Aug 9, 1574)⁵⁸ It was Beza whom Sandys saw as the “innovator” influencing Cartwright, of whom Beza glowed that “the sun does not see a more learned man.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the more Geneva-leaning Alexander Nowell was, with Calvinistic Sandys himself, among the nine commissioners who signed the warrant for Cartwright’s arrest.⁶⁰

While the criticisms may at first suggest a growing cleavage over discipline between Zurich and Geneva, we must be cautious in drawing such a conclusion. Thomas Norton, translator of Calvin's *Institutes*, said of these Puritans that he "misliked much of these men's course and fancies and matters contained in their books." Peter Toon observes, "Even Beza deplored the manner of their protest."⁶¹ At the Hampton Court Conference, in 1604, Dr. John Reynolds tried to have Whitgift's Lambeth Articles (1595), which articulated strict Calvinism, added to Thirty-Nine Articles. Thomas Rogers', *The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England* (1607), a commentary on the Articles, is both staunchly Calvinistic and conformist. Dewey Wallace notes,

No less a Church of England theologian than Richard Hooker was to say that he did not doubt that Lutherans would attain salvation in spite of their holding an error so serious as that the elect could fall from grace. And the Jacobean bishop of St. David's, Anthony Rudd, accepted the name 'Calvinist' as indicative of the theological position of the Church of England. William Barlow, made bishop of London in 1605 by King James I, said in 1601 that the differences between the bishops and the Nonconformists were 'onely for ceremonies externall, no points substantial'. Archbishop John Whitgift, in his quarrel with the Presbyterian leader Thomas Cartwright, taxed the latter for saying that the Greek fathers were saved even though they believed in free will, Whitgift commented that 'he that dieth in the opinion of free-will' could not truly hold to a faith in Christ.⁶²

Included in Whitgift's condemnation of Cartwright's errors was that "the doctrine of free-will is not repugnant to salvation."⁶³ Clearly, the familiar distinction between puritanism as the reaction of Calvinists to an increasingly open-minded *via media* cannot stand in the presence of such evidence. It is essential in this regard that one does not read the triumph of latitudinarian, Laudian churchmanship into the Elizabethan or Jacobean period.

No doubt, the rise of "puritanism" as a distinct movement with Nonconformist tendencies is, initially at least, synonymous with "presbyterianism." *The Book of Discipline*, believed to have been written by Walter Travers in the last decade of the sixteenth century, was widely circulated

in its Latin text and published in English finally in 1644. After cycles of raised and dashed hopes (from the promise of Edward's reign to his untimely death and the accession of Mary to expectations under Elizabeth and then under the Scottish King James), Puritanism may be best defined as a party within the English Reformed church that moved gradually from patient conformity to resolute nonconformity with the successive disappointments with the pace of reform. Beyond the pace, many Puritans wondered--especially when James published his *Book of Sport* and reaffirmed his commitment to episcopacy, the Prayer Book, and celebration of Christmas--whether the Reformation was actually regressing in England. And yet, puritanism often appeared more strident and more radical in its tendencies than Geneva. For instance, Calvin allowed for the celebration of Christmas and even tolerated the performance of a stage play on Sunday.⁶⁴ According to the Church Order of the Synod of Dordt, the Dutch Reformed churches were to celebrate--in addition to Sunday--Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Circumcision and Ascension. Indeed, Calvin himself took a different view altogether on the perpetuity of the Sabbath and denied its binding validity in the new covenant.⁶⁵

With Beza, however, it does seem that there is a strictness in discipline (both in polity and in terms of ceremonies and practices) that moves beyond Calvin, and the younger, third-generation English Calvinists reflect this intensification that characterizes their generation in Geneva and in the Rhineland. "Puritanism" became less of an epithet of derision of Reformed Conformists versus Reformed Non-Conformists and increasingly came to include concerns that the church's ministers were given to flowery eloquence rather than to plain, exegetical preaching and that piety was slipping considerably. No less a light than John Preston, in a sermon preached at Cambridge

in 1625, complained, "As also if we look back upon that generation of queen Elizabeth, how we are changed! They were zealous, but here is another generation come in their room, that is dead, and cold, and yet we have their light"⁶⁶ And all of this at a time when the situation was increasingly tenuous for Protestants in Europe, with the memory of the St Bartholemew's Day Massacre lingering. The reign of James I was an even greater disappointment than Elizabeth's for those seeking "further reformation." With so much promise at his accession, and raised hopes in the light of his insistence that Arminianism be crushed in Holland and in England, the contradictions bred frustration.

After Charles came to the throne, it became more apparent than ever that patient hope for reforms would not be met with success, as the king married a Roman Catholic princess, declared war on Scotland and, upon the Puritan-dominated Commons's refusal to fund the war, dissolved parliament. European scenes were being repeated in England, as "popery" and Arminianism (to which Charles and Laud were seen as English sponsors) in theology was increasingly identified with tyranny and absolutism in politics.⁶⁷ Foreign policy did not seem to give the Puritans any hope for seizing England from "Antichrist" by patient negotiation and when at last the Civil War was declared and parliament called the Westminster Assembly, we see the aims of the Puritan program in full bloom.

In his fast sermon to parliament, preached on December 22, 1642, Edmund Calamy declared,

Some turne Atheists, some Papists, some Socinians, some Arminians. Some turne like the weather-cocke, which way the winde bloweth, which way soever preferment goes, that way they turne. Many turne Neuters. Many turne from Christs side, to be of Anitchrists side, Many turne cold and Icy for God and his Church. Some are like unto the *Chamelion*, that will change it selfe

into any colour but white

Calamy informed the House of Commons that their duty is “to bring us back not onely to our first Reformation in King Edward’s dayes, but to reform the Reformation it self For we were then newly crept out of Popery, and (like unto men that come newly out of prison, where they have been long detained) it was impossible but our garments should smell a little of the Dungeon from whence we came”⁶⁸ The “reformation of the Reformation it self” meant presbyterian government, godly discipline, and homiletical and liturgical simplicity The first Reformation “was a most blessed and glorious work, like the resurrection from the Grave,” but England still wore the grave-clothes, and such a metaphor, no doubt, had more than a passing analogy to vestments⁶⁹ Furthermore, Calamy argues that the Elizabethan Settlement did not really settle anything It was not the Puritans who were disturbing the kingdom, according to the preacher, but the failure to pursue further reformation

There is a great complaint in the Kingdom The Ministers complain of their people, that they are factitious, seditious, covetous, dis-respectfull of the Ministry, &c And that because they do not reform, therefore the judgements of God are not turned away from us The people complain of their Ministers, that they are dumb dogs, greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and that they are superstitious, more for pomp then substance, and that untill the scandalous Ministers be removed, Gods heavy hand will never be removed from us

The rich complain of the poor, that they are lazy, and theevish, The poor of the rich, that they are proud and hard-hearted The superiours cry out against their inferiours, and the inferiours against the superiours And because every man expects when his neighbor should turn, hence it cometh to passe that no man in particular turns We look for that in another, which we forget to do in our selves I know no way to reconcile this division, but by raising a new division, and by perswading all sorts of people to strive, who should be the first in turning to God, who should get into Christ, who should first get into the Ark⁷⁰

Characteristic of the fast sermons preached before parliament between December, 1641, and April, 1642, Thomas Goodwin joined the chorus calling for a second or further reformation

Goodwin saw in the building of the second temple after coming out of Babylon a type of the New Testament church throughout its history, being gradually built, like the second temple, rather than all at once, like the first temple under Solomon. Gradually, Antichrist is being exposed for who he is⁷¹ Revelation chapter 13 suggests this pattern first Christ and the first-fruits The first angel preaches the gospel of Christ alone, and opposes worship of angels and saints (v 6) (Waldenses), the second (v 8), tells Rome to her face that she is the whore of Babylon (Wycliffe and Hus), the third (v 9) tells the people that everyone who partakes of her superstitions will drink God's wrath, urging separation upon pain of damnation "And then at the 14 ver you have the Son of man crowned, the Lambe having overcome the Kings, to professe and countenance the Protestant Religion with their authority"⁷² Goodwin suggests the uses of this exegesis "Let no Church therefore think it selfe perfect, and needing nothing, (as bragging Laodicea did) specially when it hath but that first foundation which it had when it came newly out of Babylon"⁷³ The reformers, like Zerubbabel, encouraged us to go on, and not to think they had finished the project⁷⁴ Now, they must turn to the worship and discipline, Goodwin insisted The problem, of course, was that Goodwin himself regarded the "Genevan discipline" itself as insufficiently reformed from popery and, no doubt, the presbyterians who allowed the Congregationalist to address the Assembly at such an auspicious occasion were reading through the lines

It was apparently inconceivable that those who opposed the Puritan program could themselves be soundly Reformed Far from being a difference of opinion (as at first the Puritans seemed to have considered their differences with Conformity), the party was now utterly convinced that hypocrisy and nominal religion were at the heart of its opposition In short, it was a moral rather than an intellectual challenge and the opposition was not merely wrong, but proud, ungodly, and

rebellious, resisting the authority of Christ the King. The Puritans merely regarded themselves as true Protestants. Calamy identified closet papists as the villains who use the term "Puritan" "to scare all men from being Protestants" ⁷⁵

Significantly, not only is it impossible to conclude that "Puritan" is equivalent to "Calvinist" in Elizabethan England (since the two universities, court, and leading churchmen all were self-consciously committed to Bullinger, Bucer, Calvin, Beza, Ursinus, et al.), Peter Lake has pointed out that even under Charles and Archbishop Laud, Calvinism and Puritanism did not always go hand-in-hand, referring us to the example of Robert Sanderson, who was one of the king's closest spiritual advisers during the Civil War. Then, at the Restoration, Sanderson was made bishop of Lincoln, "in which role he proved himself less than sympathetic to the nonconformists." And yet, "Robert Sanderson was a Calvinist, indeed, he was an evangelical Calvinist anxious to impart, through pulpit and press, the central tenets of Calvinism to the laity. He also hated Puritanism and said so loud and often" ⁷⁶

If Puritanism refers to Calvinism as distinct from some sort of Tudor-Stuart compromise on the Reformed soteriological distinctives, why did the anti-puritan Whitgift, in 1595, head a committee to draft the Calvinistic Lambeth Articles? Or the Irish Articles? Surely the leader of Irish Anglicanism, Archbishop James Ussher, is indistinguishable from the average Westminster divine, except in ecclesiology and conformity. If Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury during this period, can be such an ardent defender of Calvinistic doctrine and a John Goodwin or Richard Baxter can be considered "Puritan" in spite of their obvious Arminian sympathies, one wonders how useful a guide is the suggestion that Puritan equals Calvinist, in contrast to Conformist

churchmen⁷⁷ George Abbot's hand in restoring episcopacy to Scotland won him the royal appointment by James I to Canterbury, succeeding Bancroft. Yet, Abbot was also to be a delegate to the Synod of Dort and there defend High Calvinism, including the doctrines of particular redemption and reprobation.

In the face of the overwhelming evidence from correspondence, the records of disciplinary action taken against proto-Arminians at Oxford, Convocation decrees, sermons, officially endorsed and adopted documents, it is now impossible to see the differences between the Puritans and the Established clergy in doctrinal terms. In short, the debate is not over Calvinism's soteriological distinctives. As Trinterud put it, "To repeat the all too common observation that the Puritans attempted to introduce 'Calvinism' into England, whereas the defenders of officialdom championed 'patristic theology,' is to misunderstand a very great deal."⁷⁸ This characterization does become true under Laud, as the Puritans try to reintroduce Calvinism into the increasingly Arminian establishment, but it does not describe the situation until well into the reign of Charles I.⁷⁹ Therefore, for our purposes, we understand Puritanism to be a rather broad movement of Protestants with a reformist impulse, seeking to bring every aspect of personal, social, ecclesiastical and national life under a regulated system of government under Christ.

The Common Enemy

In spite of persecution, which fell into cruelty at various times, there were moments when the orthodox Reformed (by the early seventeenth century one may now call them "Calvinists") among Conformity and Non-Conformity could come together. Indeed, most Presbyterians did not approve of regicide in the case of Charles and many helped bring about the Restoration.

Episcopalians were invited to sit as Westminster divines (although only one actually accepted) And later, under James II and his “popish plot,” both Conformist and Non-Conformist leaders comforted each other in the Tower, refusing to give in to the king’s demands for tolerating a Roman England. But both groups also could join in common cause against the growing threat of Arminianism, Socinianism, Anabaptism, Quakerism and Antinomianism, beside which matters of vestments and church government paled, as even the most pedantic Puritan and Anglican could see.

The Arminian challenge was a case study in missing the forest for the trees, as the “further reformation,” from the point of view of a strict Calvinist, would have been to uproot the Erasmian latitudinarianism that always lurked beneath the surface of English thought. We see the ghost of Erasmus in the moralism of Hugh Latimer’s sermons⁸⁰ and in the rhetorical flourishes and humanistic wisdom of the preachers at Cambridge who attracted Thomas Goodwin during his self-described “glory-seeking” phase.⁸¹ John Goodwin, of no relation, but a fellow-Independent foe of Thomas, was fascinated with the ancients, both pagan and Christian, and Haller notes that his sermons on free will “are strewn with references to the Greek and Latin philosophers, poets, and historians.”⁸² By 1638, the Puritan John Goodwin was preaching sermons every bit as Arminian as Andrewes’s.

At their best, both the Puritans and the mainstream Anglicans profited from Erasmian humanism, but there was always the danger of a creeping moralism, rationalism, and tolerance of views that would later go by the name “Arminian.” In fact, although, as we have argued, it is improper to distinguish Puritans from mainstream churchmen in terms of a Calvinist-Arminian confrontation before the triumph of Laudian Anglicanism, Hugh Trevor-Roper correctly observes that Arminianism simply became the champion for which such “Erasmian humanists” were

looking, and that was, in Lake's words, "to consign the Elizabethan synthesis to the dustbin of history and prepare the way for the Enlightenment" ⁸³

Following on the success of Overall at Oxford in resisting orthodox Calvinism, Richard Montague defended Arminianism directly in *A Gag for the New Gospel?*, and was almost single-handedly responsible for reducing "Puritan" to "anti-Arminian," as if the rest of the Established Church had been Arminian all along ⁸⁴ Although Montague denied total depravity, the perseverance of the saints, justification *sola fide* and affirmed free will, James made Montague a royal chaplain--this in spite of Archbishop Abbot's strong opposition to even granting publishing licenses to such books. The role of King James in all of this points up the confusion of theology and politics during the period. James was faced with three factors. First, there were the Arminians themselves, whom the king regarded "like Pelagians of old" ⁸⁵ Next, there were the Puritans, whose enthusiasm for extirpating Arminianism somewhat cooled the court's zeal for the project, even though the king and his own leading churchmen sided with the Dutch Calvinists. But third, and probably most important, was the fluctuating relationship to Spain that often determined the necessary compromises of support for Holland. James turned from the determined effort to crush Arminianism (urging what became the Synod of Dordt) to making Richard Montague a royal chaplain.

Under Charles I, there was a growing interest in patristics, and this was especially true of Lancelot Andrewes and Jeremy Taylor. In the Church Fathers, the "Arminians" detected a soteriology that was more akin to moralism, stressing the freedom of the will and the natural ability to lead the life of goodness and charity. Now, at last, the differences between the

established churchmen of Laud's stripe and everyone else comes into sharper focus. It is now no longer simply an issue of "godly discipline," since, as Trevor-Roper observes, the Laudian "was an Arminian with a belief in a 'godly discipline' as rigid as that of any presbyterian Puritan."⁸⁶ By 1670, George Bull, bishop of St. David's, flatly argued justification by works (*Harmonia Apostolica*).⁸⁷ Samuel Parker, archdeacon of Canterbury and later bishop of Oxford under James II, indicted the Puritans for emphasizing justification by faith alone simply "as a cover for their licentiousness, without morals themselves, it is no wonder that they objected to the sound teaching that moral virtue and grace were the same."⁸⁸ Wallace cited the comment of Puritan Andrew Marvell, that "if Parker were to become a bishop," which he did, "I am resolved instead of his Grace to call him always his Morality."⁸⁹

But Arminianism, and in its full flower, Socinianism, were not charges levelled only at the Established clergy, as we have seen in the case of John Goodwin. As respected a Puritan as Richard Baxter came under suspicion of holding such heresies and Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, and William Twisse, were undoubtedly at the head of a long list of his enemies. Baxter, John Goodwin, and others of a similar mind were reacting against the "High Calvinism" that they regarded as being at the very least implicitly Antinomian, and Antinomianism (like Arminianism) was judged a heresy among the Reformed. Nevertheless, a great many were certain that in his laudable contempt for the heresy of freedom from the moral law Baxter was turning back to Rome, or even worse, to Socinus. Baxter was not his own best defense in this, since he did say that his differences with Rome did not involve the doctrine of justification, but superstition and idolatry.⁹⁰ In his *Aphorisms of Justification*, Baxter declared, in a curious reinterpretation of

federal theology, “Though Christ performed the conditions of the law, and satisfied for our non-performance, yet it is our selves that must perform the conditions of the Gospel ”⁹¹ For such views Owen regarded Baxter as a “Neo-nomian,” for turning the Gospel into a new Law In fact, Baxter’s *Aphorisms* refer often to “the works of the Gospel ”⁹² For this reason, Owen contributed a foreword to what many regarded as an Antinomian reaction. *William Eyre’s Justification*

Without Conditions

Owen and Goodwin Against the Arminians

In his foreword to Eyre’s volume, Owen sounds the alarm against this challenge of “an almost pure Socinian Justification ” As Wallace puts it, “Owen recommended Eyre’s book as needed to stem the rising tide of salvation by works, which concerned Owen and other strict Calvinists more than Antinomianism, although Owen in later writings disavowed justification from eternity ”⁹³ “Justification from eternity” became a hallmark of Antinomian writers who sought to guard the one-sided character of salvation by collapsing justification into predestination, refusing to even regard faith as a condition or instrumental cause of justification, as the reformers held A Westminster divine, and a man of almost singular stature in the Assembly as an international Reformed thinker, William Twisse was so horrified by the prospect of Baxterism that he declared that justification actually precedes faith ⁹⁴

With this, a paper war broke out and the mid-seventeenth century, especially in the years just following the Westminster Assembly, with such polemical titles as Laurence Wommock’s 1658 pamphlet, “Calvinisme a Cloak for the Carnal ” Both sides were using covenant theology against their opponents Those who stressed conditionality and those who stressed the unconditional

character of the covenant of grace. As we shall see, however, none of the orthodox “high Calvinists” denied that the covenant was bi-polar from the divine side, it was unconditional (God gives faith, repentance, and everything else in the Christian life apart from human merit or deserving), and yet, faith had to be exercised, the believer had to repent, and persevere in faith to the end. Nevertheless, all of those truly justified (i.e., the elect) would do so, the orthodox insisted. Haller, Toon, Wallace, and others have accused Thomas Goodwin of coming perilously close to Antinomianism, although they do not cite specific examples.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that Goodwin, like Owen, was more concerned about the threat of legalism than the menace of antinomianism, although the latter was mightily opposed. Goodwin, too, is wary of referring to faith as the *condition* of justification for the use made of it by some. None of the orthodox was denying that faith was necessary, and Goodwin himself, as we shall see, conceded that faith preceded justification, but not union with Christ.

Although the “high Calvinists” like John Owen and Thomas Goodwin may have regarded Arminianism (and with it, Socinianism) the greater threat, they did not capitulate to the opposite heresy. These divines, whose careers reach their zenith in the 1650’s, were Reformed Scholastics, not schismatics or free spirits, and this is not only clear from the corpus of their prolific work generally, but is noted in their replete citations of the continental divines. In other words, just as their contemporaries abroad saw themselves as defenders of the tradition of Ursinus, Polanus, Musculus, Martyr, Bullinger, Beza, and Calvin, the “high Calvinists” of England regarded themselves as the worthy successors to that same tradition through Perkins and the “spiritual brotherhood.” Owen and Goodwin were hardly disinterested in piety, as their work demonstrates.

beyond all doubt. It was not morality, but moralism, that they abhorred. A Christless religion that praised virtue rather than the Gospel and regarded grace as identical to graces. Owen, for instance, could observe the following among even those who hold an orthodox christology:

So many discourses published about religion, the practical holiness, and duties of obedience, are written with great elegance of style, and seriousness of argument, wherein we can meet with little or nothing wherein Jesus Christ, his office, or his grace, are concerned. Yea, it is odds but in them all we shall meet with some reflections on those who judge them to be the life and centre of our religion. The things of Christ, beyond the example of his conversation on the earth, are of no use with such persons, unto the promotion of piety and obedience.⁹⁶

That did not mean that they were willing to put up with the outright Antinomianism of Eaton or Saltmarsh, who denied the necessity of faith itself as a condition of justification. But

Antinomianism was more subtle than that. It not only involved a rejection of a grace-given act of faith as the instrument of justification; it was laden with mystical overtones. Saltmarsh believed that assurance came from a “gospel-light” that was shot like a beam into the believer’s consciousness, circumventing the natural processes of reason, conscience, and the will.⁹⁷ Similarly, Eaton was charged with “enthusiasm” for his view of assurance as a direct, intuitive light. As we shall see, Thomas Goodwin does come perilously close to such a perspective himself in his emphasis on the the intuitive “whisper” or “beam of light” from the Holy Spirit. Goodwin does not deny the objective, natural means (unlike the Antinomians), but he does explicitly argue that this mystical witness has priority. Of key interest in that discussion will be whether Goodwin’s interpretation is simply an elaboration on Calvin’s priority of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit or a dependence on Antinomian themes.

In view of all this, one is led to wonder what encouraged such an Antinomian outbreak. Was it

simply a reaction to Arminianism? Or was it, as Perry Miller argued, primarily a reaction against mainstream Puritan “preparationism,” the view (according to Miller) that an unregenerate person could prepare himself or herself for grace by appealing to natural faculties (reason, conscience, will) through natural means (attending sermons, submitting to the “Law-work” that could lead to Christ, abstaining from company that might dissuade one from taking such things seriously, etc.)? As we shall argue, preparationism was not an effect of Arminian tendencies to place the covenant on a conditional foundation, mitigating the predestinarian rigor of scholastic Calvinism. The most ardent “preparationists,” such as Thomas Hooker, Peter Bulkeley, and Thomas Shepard (all of whom went to New England in order to build a pure congregational community) were nevertheless staunch Calvinists and federalists of the highest order. Nevertheless, there is this tendency in Puritan covenant theology to emphasize one side of the bipolar covenant over the other, as von Rohr points out so thoroughly.⁹⁸ The external challenges (Arminianism), when added to the internal challenges inherent within federalism, offer a plausible explanation for the rise of Antinomianism. In fact, the Antinomian Controversy in New England placed the respected Puritan John Cotton (who converted Preston) against the elders Hooker, Bulkeley, and Shepard, as Cotton carried the standard held by his famous (or infamous) parishoner, Anne Hutchinson. Cotton had explained the New England situation along the lines outlined above: “The increasing preoccupation with the conscience in the light of the Law continued ‘til the strain proved too great, and Antinomianism set in.”⁹⁹ According to G. F. Nuttall, “Cotton’s views in 1636 and afterwards may be briefly summed up: (1) There is no saving preparation for grace prior to union with Christ, nor is there anything man can do to hasten faith or

assurance (3) Sanctification is no proof of justification Behind this conviction lies the revival of the doctrine of temporary faith ”¹⁰⁰ If these theses defined an Antinomian, it was clear that Goodwin was safe from the charge Nevertheless, he did come close to denying any form of preparationism, denied the priority often given to sanctification’s evidences, and shared Cotton’s emphasis on the priority of the intuitive *sylogismus mysticus* ¹⁰¹

There is no doubt that the Independents were more open to the mystical side of religion than were the earlier Puritans Cromwell himself had significantly mystical sympathies and even selected Saltmarsh as a chaplain While the Spirit never speaks contrary to Scripture, he does sometimes speak without the Word ¹⁰² Nevertheless, Owen’s writing does not seem similarly marked, although there are signs of Goodwin’s having been slightly affected by this emphasis among the group With these as the historical and theological roots of Puritan Nonconformity, we must briefly consider the spiritual condition that had such a large hand in shaping the movement, touching on two pastoral problems most frequently cited by the Puritans. hypocrisy and anxiety

Hypocrisy

Judging especially by the sermons, many Puritan divines were convinced that the majority within the reformed Church of England were nominal Protestants who had simply exchanged one implicit faith for another, removing, as it were, their *assensus* (which the nominal believers considered saving faith) from one authority to another Faith did not seem to make much difference in the way people reflected, lived, worshipped, or related It was politics in general and the complex diplomatic relations with France and Spain in particular that determined

ecclesiastical policy

The “Puritans” were, in the main, either returned Marian exiles who had seen the Reformed experiment first-hand on the Continent or students of these men who had been made the highest ministers in the land during Elizabeth’s reign. The returned exiles who had been given prominent positions were, as we have seen above, hardly sympathetic to the presbyterian movement, although they would have regarded themselves as part of a “spiritual brotherhood” that is now generally identified by the label “puritan.” It is a label that the Elizabethan “puritan” bishops would have rejected unequivocally. Nevertheless, the frustration of the Stuart Puritans with England’s unwillingness to pursue a more Continental-Reformed polity and lifestyle had much to do with their growing conclusion that the Elizabethan Settlement had its roots in the moral rebellion of the English people against the rule of Christ. Again, this is a difficult case to make with any precision, since many of the architects of that Settlement were themselves these returned exiles and no less personages than Bullinger and Calvin encouraged moderation and restraint in their correspondence with the Elizabethan bishops. At times, it is even rather difficult to see how Bullinger’s advice differs from the course pursued by Jewel and other staunchly Reformed bishops who nonetheless stood resolutely opposed to Puritanism.

It is, therefore, essential to underscore the difference between the pastoral context of the reformers and their Puritan successors. Of course, Luther had his *Agricolas* and Calvin his Libertines against whom they inveighed as “antinomians” and “hypocrites.” Calvin refers to hypocrisy quite often, although it is usually concerned with the ironies of the Roman Church in condemning the reformers’ message as the fountain of license and presumption while at the same time immorality and apathy seemed to reign in the highest quarters of the Curia.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, there was no question that the reformers were aware of the charge of antinomianism and were quick to counter that conclusion¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the Reformation was clearly a matter of defending assurance of a gracious pardon against what it perceived as a system of works-righteousness and this determined where they placed the weight of their pastoral concern By contrast, the Puritans seem to have observed a different context in post-Reformation England, as Calvin's successors had noted in their own European centers As the reformers were concerned, albeit secondarily, with antinomianism, the Puritans were concerned primarily with a general lack of discipline, private and ecclesiastical Thus, the main problem from the Puritan point of view was that the objective and aim of this salvation that was by grace alone through faith alone was being largely ignored, that aim being the glory of God This manifested itself in a profanation of God's name, worship, Sabbath, and daily service, and in attitudes toward the poor and the ministers Through this further reformation, it was believed, the twin sisters of "popery"--legalism and license, would be conquered Add to this the settled conviction by the seventeenth century that the kingdom of God would be established imminently, as the Protestants in England and Europe finally conquered the Roman Antichrist,¹⁰⁵ and one can begin to see how the movement increasingly radicalized and left little room even for those who held opinions that were comfortably maintained or regarded as *adiaphora* by their own Puritan forebears a generation or two earlier

Furthermore, this hypocrisy was to be met, according to the Puritans, with an earnest appeal to national repentance Significantly, the belief that Protestant England was in covenant with God did not normally lead to a self-satisfied nationalism Indeed, it seemed to create just the opposite impression Like Israel, England enjoyed a covenantal relationship with God, but the

treaty could be declared null and void if the nation failed to honor its commitments to reform even the Reformation itself On February 23, 1641, Edmund Calamy proclaimed to parliament,

Nationall mercies come from free grace, not from free will, Not from mans goodness, but Gods goodness If any shall aske, How it comes to passe, that england hath bin like Noahs Arke, safe and secure, when all other Nations have been drowned with a sea of bloud no other answer can be returned but Gods free grace and mrecy I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy May I not do what I will with my own? Repentance it self is of God's free grace Repentance is not the cause for which God sprares a Nation, but onely a qualification of that Nation which God will spare Repentance denotes the Persons, which God hath freely promised to pardon, but not the cause for which he promises to pardon If Englands mercies come from Gods goodnesse, and not our righteousnesse, let us not think our selves more righteous then Ireland, because wee are not wallowing in bloud as Ireland for if Ireland be sinfull, England hath a great share in this sinfulnessse, because it hath taken no more care to bring those Popish Rebels to the knowledge of the Gospell of Iesus Christ ¹⁰⁶

So for Calamy, as with an individual, it is a nation's relationship to the truth of the Gospel, and not its own inherent quality or virtue, that receives God's blessing rather than judgment In fact, in urging parliament to prevent any future toleration of Arminianism, Calamy pleads,

If free grace hath preserved England, not free will, Let England maintain free grace above free will I find in History, that Pelagius the greatest enemy to free grace that ever the world had, was born in England, and I am sure that England of late years hath bin too great a friend to Pelagianisme, under the name of Arminianisme .And therefore, I beseech you (right Honorable) to take this into your most serious consideration Place free grace on its Throne, advance free grace, that hath so much advanced you root out Arminianisme, settle our doctrine (not onely our Discipline) that there may be no shadow in it for an Arminian K James of famous memory, in a Declaration written to the States of Holland, cals Arminius, That enemy of God ¹⁰⁷

Closely associated with hypocrisy is presumption, and if Rome had expected Protestantism to unleash this vice on a massive scale, with its insistence on assurance of God's favor because of a confidence in an imputed righteousness, the following generations of Protestants seem to have offered some demonstrable evidence in Rome's behalf Again, it was not that the reformers themselves did not see the dangers of presumption in their teaching Nevertheless, as with

hypocrisy in general, they saw the lack of assurance as the chief pastoral problem that was required by a fundamental soteriological error. The Puritans never denied this, in fact, they were its leading defenders in England all the way to the Restoration. It was Andrewes, second only to Laud in promoting the latitudinarian purge of Puritanism from the land, who said, "We think it not safe for any man peremptorily to presume himself predestinate"¹⁰⁸ It was just this sort of assurance that the Puritan experimental piety was interested in generating.

However, it cannot be denied that the Puritans were concerned with presumption to a much greater extent than were the reformers, as the *sylogismus practicus* (inferring a state of grace from the habits of grace) and its priority in Puritan piety demonstrates. What we must not do at that point is to hastily conclude that a shift was taking place in the Reformed system. Even within the work of the reformers themselves, we find different emphases depending on the context. When Luther writes of antinomianism, he matches the Puritans' enthusiasm for extirpating this heresy¹⁰⁹ When Calvin addresses the Genevan "libertines," he is equally as direct.¹¹⁰

This also accounts for the fact that in some of Calvin's polemical defenses of predestination, there is little reference to its assumed christological center (as in his *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*), while in Beza's *Confession*, it is placed under christology rather than under the doctrine of God. Robert Letham rightly notes, "Those works in which Beza uses predestination as a governing principle were written in a polemical context, amidst the controversies raging around the views of Bolsec, Castellion and Andraeus. Bray indicates that Beza's sermons contain hardly any reference to predestination and that his letters have no significant references to the doctrine either"¹¹¹ The purpose determines the shape and method, and this is too often ignored, especially in the recent attempts to drive a wedge between Calvin and his successors.

Anxiety

A further difference in pastoral context that accounts for markedly different emphases is the matter of anxiety concerning salvation and assurance. The reformers confronted anxiety *en masse* in their ministry, but it had a different source. As we have seen already, the Council of Trent in its Sixth Session rejected the possibility of assurance of final justification.

Ironically, however, the evangelical doctrine tended to accentuate another kind of anxiety and despair. If before one had to be certain that one's sins were confessed to a priest and that proper penance had been performed in order for sins to be forgiven, now one had to be certain that one's faith--the sole instrumental cause of justification, was genuine. If the reformers' doctrine of assurance as part of the essence of faith was calculated to comfort the anxious, that is not always how it was received. Instead, many Protestants began to ask, "If I am not absolutely certain that I am elect and that Christ's death secured my own reconciliation with God, does it necessarily follow that I do not possess saving faith?" (Examples will be cited in our discussion of predestination and anxiety.) Thus, the subjective experience of "persuasion" or "assurance" often became the object rather than Christ.

The magisterial Reformation sought to drive away anxiety. But, as Randall Zachman points out, Luther's discovery itself raised other questions. "This claim creates an unavoidable dilemma for Luther: in order to be assured of our salvation, we must not only have faith in the grace of God in Jesus Christ, but we must *know* that we have genuine faith in the grace of God. We must not only receive the testimony of grace, but we must also give to ourselves the testimony of the gift--that is, a good conscience."¹¹² While the doctrine of the magisterial reformers put out one fire, it seemed to start another: if true faith includes this assurance, how can I be certain that I have true faith if I lack full assurance? In other words, the danger was that faith itself would be turned into a new form of legalism. Calvin also met this problem, when he reminds his readers that the experience of assurance is never complete in this life.¹¹³ Nevertheless, we will argue that Calvin

clearly insisted that assurance was part of the essence of saving faith. In this respect, some critics of the discontinuity thesis have overstated the case on this particular point. When, for instance, Paul Helm argues that Calvin merely holds that assurance should be, but it not necessarily, a part of saving faith, the attempt to bring Calvin and the Puritans into complete agreement, as we shall see, does not accord with some of the Reformer's clearest statements on assurance.¹¹⁴

It was the Puritans, however, who emphasized this distinction between the objective possession of assurance and the subjective feeling of assurance. While much of the preaching, especially later in the period, was directed at the "carnal professor," a great deal of the preaching that centered on this distinction was hardly calculated to drive genuine believers to despair of having true faith and assurance. It was due to their own pastoral concern for a new legalism that confused the experience of assurance with faith's essence that they emphasized a distinction that Luther and Calvin had already made between objective reality and subjective experience. Puritans like Thomas Goodwin were insistent on making justification depend on a direct act of faith rather than on the comfort or experience of saving faith. There is no new theological shift, in other words, from the magisterial reformers to the Puritans in this matter of assurance as part of the essence of faith, it is the practical application in pastoral practice that accounts for different emphases. For both the reformers and the Puritans, the same theological motivation directs two distinct pastoral positions, and that motivation is the grace of God in the gospel. This will be argued in the following chapters.

It will be maintained, when we come to the nature of saving faith, that it was this tendency to replace Christ with faith and assurance as the object that accounted for the sharp distinction (but not separation) between faith and assurance in the Puritans, Goodwin providing a clear example of

this proposition. Against R. T. Kendall and the “discontinuity” thesis, we will argue that this sharp distinction is (a) not a systematic theological departure from Calvin’s soteriology, in spite of differences and (b) not motivated by an “experimental predestinarianism” so much as by understandable and legitimate pastoral problems arising from the doctrine of assurance taught by the reformers. At the same time, the continuing reflection and systematization that goes on under different contexts, with different threats and challenges, is sure to produce changes in pastoral practice. While the Westminster divines were not making any theological break with the Genevan reformer, it is surely claiming too much to conclude, with B. B. Warfield, that there is nothing in Westminster “which is not to be found expressly set forth in the writings of John Calvin.”¹¹⁵

There can be no doubt that English Puritanism, as its counterparts in Europe, was part of an evolving Reformed tradition. Beza and other Reformed theologians who exploited scholastic categories were systematic in ways in which Calvin surely was not. But, as Richard Muller argues, that is what happens in the emergence and development of any system. First it is articulated and then it is organized. “Perkins and Polanus, with other thinkers of their generation, provided Reformed theology with its second major synthesis and systematization of themes just prior to the internecine disputes with Arminius.”¹¹⁶ Just at that juncture, a man came to the scene who would represent a harmonization of the Dutch and English Puritans on the question of assurance in particular.¹¹⁷ And it is the thought of this Puritan divine, Thomas Goodwin, that we shall compare and contrast with his colleagues and Reformed predecessors, especially in his contribution to the doctrine of assurance.

Lurking in the background and often brought into the foreground as well is the “discontinuity” thesis. This highly influential thesis shall be described below and it will be the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate the continuity between Calvin and his English disciples by closely examining the work of one of the most prominent Puritan divines of the period.

Defining The "Discontinuity Thesis"

According to the discontinuity thesis, Calvin and the later Calvinists (especially the federal Puritans) are hardly recognizable as relatives. In fact, the Westminster divines are accused of being "crypto-Arminian," and although they "never intended to make works the grounds of salvation, they could hardly have come closer"¹¹⁸. By affirming a definite atonement (Christ's death as limited in its scope to the elect) these federal theologians made it almost impossible to exercise saving faith or at least to be assured of saving faith apart from the most rigorous works. Faith became an act of man, located in the will, and preparation for the Gospel by the work of the Law, all combined to create a serious departure from the Genevan reformer.

While rejecting the Hegelian scheme of Protestant liberalism, the nineteenth century Dutch Reformed dogmatist Heinrich Heppe conceded the usefulness of the enterprise to locate a "central dogma" in Calvin and later Reformed theologians. Since then, there has been a tendency in Post-Reformation scholarship to identify (and perhaps pigeonhole) the key figures by the organizing principle of their system.¹¹⁹ Added to the search for a central dogma the assumption made widely plausible by James B. Torrance, Basil Hall, and more recently, R. T. Kendall and Charles Bell, that a shift can be detected between the christocentric theology of Calvin and the decree-orientated system of Beza and the Puritans.¹²⁰ Tony Lane argues that Calvin did not have a central principle. "Calvinism, on the other hand, exalts the external decrees of God into such a position," and places predestination under the doctrine of God. "Calvinism manifests a *greater* concern for a logically consistent watertight system than does Calvin," (emphasis in original) although Lane is more cautious in arguing for discontinuity.¹²¹

According to those who claim a wide gulf between Calvin and his successors, Theodore Beza turned Reformed theology, with its focus upon Christ and the objective Gospel, into a mysterious system of metaphysical speculation that had more in common with the very medieval scholasticism that Calvin had abandoned. Through Beza and the Rhineland theologians, the Puritans received this corrupted Calvinism and the results were pastorally devastating as they were theologically disturbing. Predestination replaced christology at the center, scholastic method replaced exegesis, faith was now viewed as active and located in the will rather than passive and located primarily in the intellect, as it had been for Calvin. And worst of all, these changes required a subjective, introspective orientation that drove many to despair--the very ones Luther and Calvin had labored so indefatigably to persuade of their assurance through faith.¹²²

This reading of the discontinuity between Calvin and the Calvinists (especially the seventeenth century English Puritans) has much to commend it. First, it offers a way of explaining the different nuances, second, it observes the obvious differences in method between Calvin and his successors. Nevertheless, "Calvinism" does not yet exist by the time Perkins is formulating an English "Calvinism." Hall, Kendall, Torrance, Bell, et al., make too much rest on Calvin, as though he were the only representative figure of Reformed thought in the middle to late sixteenth century. It is not Calvin's successors but his contemporary associates who reflect such varying points of view as Bullinger (who, in response to the Bolsec affair, informed Calvin that he did not affirm reprobation) and among them, surely Calvin was not the least "predestinarian." Therefore, Kendall's insistence that Calvin's successors are marked by a "predestinarian" emphasis that escapes Calvin himself is hardly justified.

Furthermore, Beza was hand-picked by Calvin to succeed him as the pastor of St. Pierre's and led the affairs of church and academy while his senior was still living. In fact, when a debate erupted in Swiss and French Reformed circles over double predestination, Calvin and Beza both launched their defenses of the doctrine, including Calvin's treatises and Beza's *Tabula*.¹²³ Surely those who argue for sharp discontinuity are more aware of the radical shifts proposed by Beza than was Calvin himself. And finally, the discontinuity thesis not only assumes that the Reformed system began with, but also that it ended with, the Genevan reformer. Rather, it was (and is) a system, the era of Post-Reformation dogmatics was the period of systematic development. As Luther was followed by Melancthon and the later systematizers, so Calvin gave the Reformed tradition a massive body of thought to distill, harmonize, exegete, and organize into a coherent system. This scholastic process ought not *necessarily* be considered either a negative development, nor a departure from the "purity" of Calvin's message. In other words, that scholastic categories and methods are employed does not mean that any significant theological change has taken place for better or worse—it is a question of method and system, not content.¹²⁴ We shall also see that Calvin himself was not always consistent in such systematic details as the seat of the *actus fidei*. Refinement will always result in charges of distortion, but there are significant differences in pastoral advice in the matter of assurance—not only among Calvin and the "Calvinists," but among the Reformed fathers themselves. If they did not recognize a major theological shift precipitated by their contemporaries (especially with Beza in such close cooperation with Calvin), then surely the same sentiments expressed by successors ought not to necessarily imply distortion or deviation from the essential Reformed corpus.

Also essential to understanding the development of this doctrine of assurance between Calvin and his English successors is the emergence of a covenantal organizing principle. Ever since Perry Miller first suggested that the covenant motif was interjected to soften the strict supralapsarianism of the Reformed scholastics, it has been popular to see federal theology as a counter-weight to predestination. Peter Toon sees federalism as a major departure from Calvin. Not only is it “too neat and tidy”, it “stretches the Biblical data in favour of a systematic approach.”¹²⁵ Further, Toon concurs with the discontinuity thesis that the placement of predestination under the doctrine of God marks a departure from Calvin’s christocentric placement. Calvin “did not put it at the beginning of theological study where it can so easily become mere speculation but placed it in the context of God’s gift of salvation, which is where Paul places it.”¹²⁶ Further, Toon, consistent with the theses of Kendall and Brian Armstrong, argues that the “Calvinistic” and federal doctrine of limited atonement was foreign to Calvin.¹²⁷

Tony Lane follows J. B. Torrance in arguing that Calvin differs from the Calvinists in that he did not believe that the atonement *by itself* saved, but that it required the work of all three members of the Trinity.¹²⁸ But there would be no difference between Calvin and the Calvinists, with the latter’s emphasis on the trinitarian economy. They simply believed that the three members agreed in the scope of their work. It is this trinitarian scheme that is so widely employed in Goodwin’s rather broadly representative presentation of federal Calvinism.

J. B. Torrance essentially attributes the rise of federalism to the socio-political factors within England, Scotland, and New England. “The background of much theological controversy was the emerging socio-political philosophy of ‘social contract,’ ‘contract of government,’ ‘the rights of

man,' 'natural law,' " and this "birth of modern democracy (and the so-called 'American way of life') provided a conceptual framework within which Reformed theology was to be recast (federal theology) "129 Whatever one might conclude of the discontinuity thesis, one can appreciate Torrance's distinction between covenant and contract and there is sufficient evidence in the Puritans to support him in his claim that, "If, as Bonhoeffer has urged, Lutheranism can sometimes turn free grace into cheap grace, Puritan Calvinism can sometimes turn costly grace into conditional grace "130 Nevertheless, one must question the anachronism of arguing that the rise of "the so-called 'American way of life'" is responsible for the intricate and sophisticated development of covenant theology

Rolston Holmes III joins Torrance, Kendall, Bell and Armstrong in contending that federalism played a significant part in "a prolonged detour away from the insights of the Reformers "131 Michael Jinkins argues that the "federal" God of the New England elders was "essentially the God of Aristotle and the abstract, speculative Scholastic categories, the fatalistic God, the static God of Stoicism, the divine Law-giver " Furthermore, the appeal to "objective" evidences of justification in one's sanctification demonstrates that "the entire system was upheld by a naive conception of the limited extent of human finitude and sin "132 Further, limited atonement is purely the creation of Aristotelian philosophy Thus, their legalism was driven by a struggle "to conceive of atonement as a human-divine co-operation, and thus were set on a course to discover means to put an end to their abiding insecurity concerning personal election by the essentially unknown and arbitrary God " 133 The first assertion ignores the strict monergism demanded by federalism and the second fails to take into account the Puritan distinction between

the direct act of faith, which does not have an unknown and arbitrary God as its object, but the clear Gospel promises of free forgiveness in Christ, and the faith of assurance, which does not locate the “unknown” in God’s essence, but in his secret will. Jinkins sees evidence of the Puritan belief in divine “arbitrariness” in Preston’s remark, “What God wills is just, because he is the rule itself.”¹³⁴ Finally, Jinkins asserts that federalism was the source of the individualism so prominent in American revivalism. Jinkins is sympathetic to John Cotton, “But sadly, he was unable to break free from the individualism of the Federal model to see the deeper, corporate understanding of sanctification *in Christ* available to Reformed theology in Calvin.”¹³⁵ And yet, one can see from the very outset that a scheme that focuses on the unity of the Trinity in the Covenant of Redemption and of the church in the Covenant of Grace that there is a tremendous corporate emphasis. Christ as the Head in whom the elect are chosen, redeemed, called, and preserved surely carries an inherently corporate motif. Whatever can be charged to covenant theology, individualism is certainly not one that can even stand in the presence of the word “covenant” itself. We shall demonstrate that corporate emphasis in the federalism of the leading Puritans. Jinkins correctly observes a growing individualistic element in Puritan piety, but this is more likely to be attributable to more direct factors, such as an ecclesiological “covenant” that differs from the soteriological Covenant of Grace,” in that the former is dependent on a distinct conversion narrative, while the latter is dependent on the mediation of Christ. It is no wonder that where the Independent ecclesiology dominated, especially in New England, individualism became increasingly marked.

A thorough study of Thomas Goodwin’s presentation of this Puritan, federal theology, at a

time of tremendous confusion and heated debate, is compelling in its evidence of the Independent divine as, in Tudur Jones' description, "a notably warm-hearted theologian," whose language, especially concerning union with Christ, ought to give pause to critics of the so-called cold, dry "legalism" of federal theology¹³⁶ In fact, it is not, as Jinkins and others suggest, that Calvin emphasized "union with Christ" and the Calvinists emphasized a covenantal scheme Both Calvin and his successors emphasized union with Christ, the real question is whether the relationship of the Head and his members is realistic, as in the Eastern fathers for whom Torrance and other seem to have a great deal of sympathy, or representative¹³⁷ We shall argue that neither Calvin nor the Calvinists clearly distinguish these two, but that both affirm the representative model that underlies the federal scheme The theological forebears of the Puritans, especially among the Swiss reformers and Protestant scholastics, placed the mediatorial role of Christ as priest at the heart of their system and, as Muller has argued persuasively, it was in relation to "Christ the Mediator" that the federal scheme developed its predestinarian doctrine¹³⁸

Just as Luther defended predestination on the basis that it guarded justification, so the Reformed argued the doctrine for its implications for *sola gratia* and *sola fide* Dewey Wallace observes, "The theology of grace found among the Swiss theologians began, as it did for Luther, with justification by faith alone" Even predestination is central for soteriological reasons "As Peter Martyr clearly stated, 'Free justification also should perish, except we be rightlie taught of predestination'" and without it "the 'grace of God' cannot 'be sufficientlie defended against the Pelagians'" Wallace offers a great deal of evidence demonstrating that the Rhineland theologians who influenced the Puritans were committed to the centrality of justification--not simply within

the system, but for piety “For covenant theology never really compromised a theology of grace but was a way of explicating and making intelligible from the human side what from God’s side remained always a simple act of free mercy”¹³⁹ “The preaching of the glory of God’s grace in Christ has with some justice been regarded as the central motif of the Puritan movement”¹⁴⁰

In the following chapters, we shall follow these discussions as they impinge on the doctrine of assurance, using a prominent and strategic Puritan divine as an example of both the continuity between Calvin and the Calvinists and the diversity within the Puritan movement itself. The purpose, then, will be to appreciate Goodwin’s significant contributions, to gain a greater insight into the Puritan doctrine of assurance, and to recognize the essential unity and continuity of the Reformed system in spite of its inherent diversity in method and structure. The purpose of this thesis, then, is two-fold. First, to recognize the significance this Westminster divine’s contributions to Reformed theology, particularly on the point of assurance, second, to challenge the “discontinuity thesis” put forward by James Torrance, Brian Armstrong, R. T. Kendall and a number of other scholars.

The Significance of Goodwin

With a long life for the period (1600-80), Thomas Goodwin was shaped by and shaped English Puritanism to a degree often overlooked by current scholarship in this field. One scholar of the period laments, “Major studies on Goodwin’s theology are few”¹⁴¹ And yet, Goodwin has exercised a significant influence on such worthies as John Cotton, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Gill, and Alexander Whyte.¹⁴² Brian Freer declares, “Goodwin was a

monumental figure who played a vital part in the development of Puritanism at a crucial time”¹⁴³ Just as Sibbes had counseled him upon his conversion, Goodwin had remained faithful to the proclamation of “Christ set forth” in his saving office throughout his entire career. When he died in February of 1679, the preacher breathed his last

I could not have imagined I should ever have had such a measure of faith in this hour, no I could not have imagined it. My bow abides in strength. Is Christ divided? No I have the whole of his righteousness, I am found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but in the righteousness which is of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, who loved me and gave himself for me. Christ cannot love me better than he doth. I think I cannot love Christ better than I do. I am swallowed up in God.¹⁴⁴

Not only is Goodwin ideal for this purpose because his life spans the most definitive period of Puritanism, linking him to the significant origins of the movement (William Perkins died two years after Goodwin’s birth) as well as to its later developments (second in stature only to Owen among Independents), Goodwin is also well-suited as a major figure in the debate over assurance because of his link to Dutch discussions, and the enormous dependence of English Protestantism (and especially Puritanism) on Continental sources cannot be denied. It has even been suggested that in Goodwin we find “the merging of English-Dutch thinking on assurance”¹⁴⁵. Any suggestion that Reformed Scholasticism is dry, legalistic or lacking in devotional impact may be finally put to rest by a close study of Goodwin.

Goodwin is ideal as a central figure in the discussion over assurance and related soteriological loci also because, in spite of his importance in the development of Puritanism beyond Independency, he has not received the attention enjoyed by other leaders of the period, such as John Owen.

A final reason for marking Goodwin’s significance in the discussion is that in him we find one

who, as a systematic theologian, spent a great deal of spiritual and intellectual energy wrestling with the connection between soteriology and pneumatology. With attempts over the last century and a half to separate the magisterial reformers from their successors, especially the Westminster federalist divines, Thomas Goodwin should surely represent the yawning chasm between Calvin and the Calvinists, however, this simply is not the case. In spite of differences in pedagogical and pastoral applications of Reformed theology, Goodwin is clearly in the spiritual lineage of the “theologian of the Holy Spirit.” At the same time, Goodwin is a consistent Puritan and is hardly aware of any departure from any *consensus fidelium*.

The one noteworthy exception to Goodwin’s fidelity to Calvin’s thought is the matter of whether assurance is of the essence of faith, and yet we shall argue that too much has been made even of this difference, and that the difference is due to pastoral context rather than to a modification of Calvin’s theological system. By focusing on one characteristic Puritan divine in connection with the “Calvin and the Calvinists” debate, we hope to obtain a sharper picture of the Puritan doctrine of assurance at the peak of its refinement. While this study does not attempt to provide an exhaustive treatment of a movement that is much more diverse than we often recognize, it will attempt to show that Dewey’s sympathetic description of the Swiss and Puritan Reformed movements in general finds one of its ablest expressions in the devotional theology of Thomas Goodwin, in his vigorous attempt to set Christ forth.

Notes to Chapter One

1 William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (NY: Harper, 1957), p. 75

2 Brian Freer, “Thomas Goodwin the Peaceable Puritan,” in *Diversities of Gifts*, The Westminster Conference Papers (London: Westminster Chapel, 1980), p. 9

- 3 William Haller, *op cit*, p 145
- 4 *ibid*, p 75
- 5 Brian Freer, *op cit*, p 9
- 6 William Haller, *op cit*, p 75
- 7 Brian Freer, *op cit*, p 11
- 8 *ibid*, p 12
- 9 William Haller, *op cit*, p 75
- 10 Cited by James Reid, "The life of Thomas Goodwin," in *Memoirs of the Westminster Divines* (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1982, from the 1811 edition), p 331
- 11 T Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs, William Bridge, *An Apologeticall Narration*, a facsimile edition of 1643 document, Robert S Paul (Boston United Church Press, 1983), p 4
- 12 Cited by Robert S Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and the 'Grand Debate'* (Edinburgh T & T Clark, 1985), p 362
- 13 T Goodwin, in *An Apologeticall Narration*, *op cit*
- 14 Robert S Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord*, *op cit*, throughout its Minutes makes abundant references to Goodwin's role. It was he who replied to every major presbyterian overture and presented the Dissenting Brethren's case
- 15 *ibid*
- 16 *ibid*, p 555
- 17 *ibid*, p 362
- 18 *ibid*
- 19 Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans* (London Thomas Tegg and Son, 1837), vol 2, p 539
- 20 Cited by Peter Toon, *op cit*, p 47
- 21 Daniel Neal, *op cit*, vol 3, p 122
- 22 Contained in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D D* (London James Nichol, 1862), vol 4, p 3-10
- 23 *ibid*
- 24 *ibid*
- 25 *ibid*
- 26 *ibid*
- 27 *ibid*
- 28 *ibid*
- 29 John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans and ed, J K S Reid (London T & T Clark, 1961), p 130
- 30 Goodwin, *Christ Set Forth*, *op cit*, p 5
- 31 Cited in Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 166. Beeke has an excellent section on Goodwin, pp 323-359
- 32 Cf Goodwin, vol 8, pp 351, 366, Owen, vol 6, pp 500-600, for more on this
- 33 Cited by R T Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1979), p 91
- 34 John Owen, Preface to vol 6, *Works*
- 35 Cited by F J Powicke, *The Rev Richard Baxter under the Cross* (London, 1927), pp 174-5
- 36 John Owen, 6 89
- 37 *ibid*, 1 43
- 38 Representative works expressing the three-fold definition of faith include Ursinus' *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* as well as the Heidelberg Catechism itself, joined by the Belgic Confession as well as the Westminster Confession and Catechisms

39 Calvin writes, "Also, there are very many who so conceive God's mercy that they receive almost no consolation from it. They are constrained with miserable anxiety at the same time they are in doubt whether he will be merciful to them. But there is a far different feeling of full assurance that in the Scriptures is always attributed to faith. It is this which puts beyond doubt God's goodness clearly manifested for us. By these words [Eph 3:12] he obviously shows that there is no right faith except when we dare with tranquil hearts to stand in God's sight. Now it is an assurance that renders the conscience calm and peaceful before God's judgment." Nevertheless, this "full assurance" does not mean the absence of all doubts. "Surely, while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety. On the contrary, we say that believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief" (3:2:15-17). Therefore, it is not impossible to harmonize Calvin's view of faith with Westminster's in its basic affirmation, since the reformer does not view "full assurance" as the experience of unassailed certainty. While there is cleavage, there is not contradiction.

40 Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987), ix, x.

41 Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: Hambledon Press), *The Religion of the Protestants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

42 C. M. Dent, *Protestant Reformers in Elizabethan Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 222. Nicholas Tyacke also notes, "Outwardly Oxford University continued to present a uniform Calvinist face until 1607," *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 62.

43 Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p. 32.

44 *The Zurich Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1842), Parker Society edition.

45 *ibid*, p. 32.

46 Strype, *Annals*, I:11, 223.

47 *Zurich Letters*, p. 33.

48 *ibid*, p. 52.

49 *ibid*, p. 77.

50 *ibid*, p. 289.

51 *ibid*, p. 74.

52 *ibid*, p. 100.

53 *ibid*, p. 344.

54 *ibid*, p. 347.

55 *ibid*, p. 352.

56 *ibid*, p. 296. Furthermore, Strype records "puritan propositions" as essentially matters of ecclesiology, as Cartwright, Clark, and Sampson especially cry down the hierarchy. The institution of bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, and patriarchs "a Satana in ecclesiam introducti sunt. Inter ministros ecclesiae, non debet alius alio esse superior" (Strype, *Annals*, III, p. 278).

Those who most distinguish the Puritans from general Elizabethan and Stuart Protestantism tend to see the movement as something that "may be regarded as pietism grounded in moral legalism," Derek Baker, *Reform and Reformation: England & The Continent (1500-1750)*, ed. by D. Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), p. 109, or as a significant departure from the magisterial Reformers, especially Calvin (Perry Miller, R. T. Kendall, Charles Bell, et al.), in favor of the alleged moralism and scholasticism of Beza and Bullinger. Others, like W. A. Clebsch, regard the Puritans as heirs of an indigenous moralism due to the Lollards, and Derek Baker cites Tyndale as the culprit. Basil Hall defines the Puritans as those in the Church of England before 1642 "who desired some modifications in Church government" ["Puritanism: The Problem of Definition,"

Studies in Church History (1965), 11, p 289] And yet, if that is the case, there are many who have been classified as Puritans and counted themselves as members of that “spiritual brotherhood” who never raised the slightest concern over church government, such as William Perkins, John Preston, Richard Sibbes, John Downname, and a host of other Puritan luminaries. If, by the definitions of Jewel, Sandys, and other Elizabethan bishops, a “puritan” was a presbyterian follower of Cartwright, the most formative figures in Puritanism would not actually have worn that label. It is only in retrospect that “Puritanism” takes on a broader definition.

57 *ibid*, p 309

58 *ibid*, p 311

59 *ibid*, p 313n

60 *ibid*

61 Peter Toon, *op cit*, p 16

62 Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p 36

63 William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (NY Harper, 1957), p 11

64 W de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids Baker, 1994), p 46

65 Calvin, *Institutes* 2.8.28-34

66 John Preston, *The Golden Sceptre* (Ligonier, PA Soli Deo Gloria, 1990), p 11

67 Cf Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1992)

68 Edmund Calamy, in *The English Revolution I: Fast Sermons to Parliament*, Vol 2, reproduced in facsimile with notes by Robin Jeffs (London Cornmarket Press, 1970), p 58

69 *ibid*, p 46-7

70 *ibid*, p 78

71 *ibid*, p 395, Goodwin’s “Zerubbabels Encouragement to Finish the Temple,” April 27, 1642

72 *ibid*, p 397

73 *ibid*, p 398

74 *ibid*, p 399

75 *ibid*, p 148

76 Peter Lake, *op cit*, p 81

77 Richard Baxter attempted to harmonize Lutheran, Reformed, Arminian and Jesuit soteriology on the chief articles of the Reformation debate in his *Catholick Theologie* (1675)

78 Leonard Trinterud, ed, *Elizabethan Puritanism*, p 303

79 Peter Lake, Review Article, “Protestants, Puritans and Laudians,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol 42, no 4, Oct 1991, pp 618-628. “The recent literature on early modern English Protestantism, particularly on the Elizabethan period, has sought to replace the old bi-polar model of an Anglican establishment and a Puritan opposition with a vision of a unitary English reformed tradition, a tradition informed by a variety of continental influences,” including Geneva. “The bearers of the resulting English reformed tradition, it is argued, saw themselves not so much as members of some superior, because distinctively English and moderate, *via media* between Rome and Geneva, but rather as a branch of an international reformed Church.” (p 618)

80 Hugh Latimer’s sermon, “The Sermon on the Plough,” in *The English Sermon*, vol 1, 1550-1650, Martin Seymour-Smith, ed (Surrey The Gresham Press, 1976), p 56

81 T Goodwin, “Life,” from vol I

82 William Haller, *op cit*, p 199

83 Peter Lake, p 625

84 Tvacke, *The Anti-Calvinist: The Rise of English Arminianism* (Oxford Oxford Univ Press, 1987), pp 123-163

85 cited by Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p 82

- 86 Bishop Bull's *Harmonia Apostolica* was first published in 1670, but more recently by Oxford University Press, in 1846, second edition
- 87 Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays* (London, 1957), p 136
- 88 Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p 167
- 89 *ibid*, p 169
- 90 *ibid*, p 181
- 91 Richard Baxter, *Aphorisms of Justification*, pp 96, 100-108
- 92 Richard Baxter's *Confession*, pp 33-5
- 93 Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p 120
- 94 *ibid*, p 119
- 95 cf Paul Cook, "Thomas Goodwin Mystic?," *Diversity of Gifts* (Westminster Conference Reports, 1980)
- 96 John Owen, *Works* I 41-44, 287, 302-7
- 97 Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p 118
- 98 John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta Scholars Press, 1986)
- 99 Quoted from G F Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford Oxford Univ Press, 1947), p 36
- 100 The *sylogismus mysticus* was sometimes employed by later Puritans alongside the *sylogismus practicus*, the latter consisting of a syllogism through which the being of justifying faith is ascertained by its fruit, while the former discovers the state of grace through a direct act of assurance from the Holy Spirit As is argued later in the thesis, Thomas Goodwin holds that the sealing in or by the Holy Spirit is the same as full assurance and for him the *sylogismus mysticus* clearly has priority over the practical syllogism
- 101 *ibid*
- 102 Robert S Paul, *The Lord Protector Religion and Politics in the Life of Oliver Cromwell* (London Lutterworth, 1955), p 255n
- 103 In his prefatory address to King Francis, from *The Institutes*, Calvin acknowledges that there are some who use the gospel for license, but that this has been true since the days of the apostles If the occasion is still offered by the preaching of the gospel, then it is a sign of the true preaching of the gospel that some use it to their own presumptuous self-destruction
- 104 Melancthon, in his *Loci Communes* (1555), points out that "grace and the gifts are bound together And by no means is one to think that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, bore God's great wrath, and poured out his blood that men might continue in their raving madness and depravity Also it must be obvious that if conversion to God does not happen, and the heart continues in sin against conscience, that there is no true faith that desires or receives forgiveness of sins The Holy Spirit is not in a heart in which there is no fear of God, but instead a continuing defiance," trans by Clyde L Manschreck (Grand Rapids Baker, 1965), pp 181-2
- 105 Cf Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London Verso, 1990)
- 106 Edmund Calamy, "God's Free Mercy to England," *op cit*, p 160
- 107 *ibid*, p 162
- 108 *Two Answers to Cardinal Perron*, Lancelot Andrewes (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1854)
- 109 Johannes Agricola opposed Luther and Melancthon by asserting that the law of God no longer had a binding force on the Christian Luther was so outraged that he encouraged the Elector to begin the process of trying Agricola for heresy, but the latter fled Wittenberg and wrote what the Elector considered a retraction, although Luther never considered it such Melancthon's Articles V, VII, VIII, from his *Loci Communes*, are written with Agricola's refutation in mind
- 110 In response to the troubling antinomians of Geneva, Calvin wrote, *Contra la secte phantastique des libertins*, in 1545 They are not only "enthusiasts," seeking revelation beyond

- Scripture and exulting in the “spiritual” in Gnostic fashion, they, like Agricola, regard this eminently superior condition sufficient to reject the moral law as a “dead letter”
- 111 Robert Letham, “Theodore Beza A Reassessment,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 40, 1987, pp 25-40
- 112 Randall Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Minneapolis Fortress, 1993), p 71
- 113 Calvin “Surely, while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety On the other hand, we say that believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief” (*Institutes* 3 2 17)
- 114 Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1982), p 26 As we shall see later in this thesis, Calvin equated faith and assurance, as in *The Institutes*, 3 2 15-16 Entirely missing from Calvin’s view of faith is the fearful conscience and the subject’s doubt concerning the state of his soul If one trusts in Christ, “ there is no right faith except when we dare with tranquil hearts to stand in God’s sight This boldness arises only out of a sure confidence in divine benevolence and salvation This is so true that the word ‘faith’ is very often used for confidence ” Furthermore, “It is an assurance that renders the conscience calm and peaceful before God’s judgment ” While, as Dr Helm notes, Calvin admitted that faith is always tinged with doubt, he never held, as the Puritans did, that at any moment doubt could be greater than assurance Those who are forever anxious about the state of their soul cannot be said to believe “But there is a far different feeling of full assurance that in the Scriptures is *always* attributed to faith It is this which puts beyond doubt God’s goodness clearly manifested *for us*” (3 2 15, emphasis added)
- 115 B B Warfield, *Studies in Theology* (Oxford Oxford Univ Press, 1932), p 148
- 116 Richard Muller, *op cit*, p 181
- 117 Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 323
- 118 R T Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1979), pp 209, 295
- 119 Richard Muller, *op cit*, pp 1-8
- 120 R T Kendall, *op cit*, B G Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), Basil Hall, “Calvin Against the Calvinists,” in *John Calvin*, G E. Duffield, ed , Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology (Appleford Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966), M Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh The Handsel Press, 1985)
- 121 Tony Lane, “The Quest for the Historical Calvin,” *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol LV, no 2, April, 1983, p 93
- 122 This is the tragic note running throughout Kendall’s work, *op cit*, Luther and Calvin freed the conscience, but the Calvinists succeeded in essentially reversing the Reformation
- 123 Jill Rait, *The Colloquy of Montbelliard Religion and Politics in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford Oxford Univ Press, 1993), p 23
- 124 Richard Muller, *op cit*, p 17 “The question that needs to be asked is not whether Calvin is a scriptural theologian and the Reformed scholastics unscriptural rationalists, but whether the doctrinal motifs drawn by Calvin from scripture are echoed, elaborated, developed, or neglected and set aside by the systems of the ‘orthodox’ or ‘scholastic’ thinkers of subsequent generations ”
- 125 Peter Toon, *Puritans and Calvinism* (Swengel, PA Reiner Publications, 1973), p 60
- 126 *ibid*, p 61
- 127 *ibid*, p 63 ff
- 128 Tony Lane, *op cit*, p 93

- 129 J B Torrance, "Covenant or Contract," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 23, no 1, February, 1970, p 53, for a thorough treatment of the roots of federal thought, see Charles S McCoy and J Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville Westminster/John Knox, 1991)
- 130 J B Torrance, "Covenant or Contract," *op cit*, p 56
- 131 Holmes Rolston III, "Responsible Man in Reformed Theology Calvin vs The Westminster Confession," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 23, no 2, May, 1970, p 129
- 132 Michael Jinkins, "John Cotton and the Antinomian Controversy, 1636-38," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 43, pp 321-349
- 133 *ibid*, p 328
- 134 *ibid*, p 332
- 135 *ibid*, p 344
- 136 Tudur Jones, "Union with Christ The Existential Nerve of Puritan Piety," *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol 41 2, November, 1990, p 196
- 137 Tudur Jones, *ibid* "J C Brauer of Chicago has complained recently that so little scholarly attention has been paid to the nature of Puritan piety" Jones concurs, especially on the nature of the Pauline formula, "in Christ" This emphasis begins with Luther, and is not only central for Calvin, but for the most formative Puritans as well John Preston (1587-1628) observed, "To be in Christ is the ground of all salvation" [*An Abridgement* (1648)] For Goodwin, we are in Christ "before the world was" Next, in his incarnation, as "he represents us, doth what we have to do," so that even the incarnation is viewed through the lense of Christ as mediator (and fulfiller) of the covenant Then, third, the believer experiences union with Christ "A man, before he is called, is justified *in* Christ, but not *with* Christ, that is, it is not actually applied to the man's person" (Eph, 1681 edition of Works II, p 242) Jones observes, "Ever since Gregory of Nyssa (330-c 395 AD), the so-called 'Father of Christian Mystical Theology,' had distinguished three stages in the spiritual pilgrimage, those of purification, enlightenment and (after darkness) union with God, this scheme had become a standard pattern" (p 191) This pattern was carried on in the West by Bonaventure But, as Jones points out, against those who would see a correspondence here, the Puritans believed that "Union with Christ is not the end but the beginning of the Christian life" (p 192), and it is not attained by "ladders"
- 138 Richard Muller, *op cit*, p 10
- 139 Dewey Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination* (Chapel Hill. Univ of North Carolina, 1982), pp 5-10
- 140 *ibid*, p 44
- 141 Joel Beeke, *The Assurance of Faith* (Amsterdam Peter Lang, 1991), pp 350 ff
- 142 *ibid*
- 143 Brian Freer, *op cit*, p 7
- 144 *ibid*, p 19
- 145 Joel Beeke, *op cit*, *ibid*

Chapter Two

Predestination & Anxiety

According to the seventeenth and most lengthy of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England,

The godly consideration of Predestination and our Election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God

And yet, the study of the subject has most dangerous effects on the “carnal professor”¹

The Articles are not commonly regarded as a Puritan document, nevertheless, the elements that were to be emphasized by the Puritans in this connection with predestination are present already in the principal consensus of the English church. In the Article, one is taught that the doctrine of election is calculated to comfort the afflicted, but that it is certainly not to bring comfort or safety to those who do not “feel within themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members”². If this is what proponents of the discontinuity thesis mean by “experimental predestinarianism,” the alleged shift from a christocentric, non-introspective predestinarianism cannot be attributed to Beza and Perkins, but to Cranmer and the Edwardian divines³

In his *Loci Communes* (1555), Melancthon defended single predestination, but offered a similar caution to the Articles’ “However, two temptations arise from our anxiety the first stems from merit and the enormity of sins, the second, from a question about whether the promise is

offered to *all* men. Yes, one might say, the promise belongs to those whose names are written in God's book, David, Peter, and some others, but perhaps it does not belong to *me*?" And here Luther's scholastic systematizer turns to the universal offer of the Gospel.⁴

The fact that Melancthon recognized the opportunity for anxiety afforded by the doctrine of even single predestination and that he is so acutely aware of the obvious question, "But does it belong to *me*?" points up that the relationship of predestination to assurance was not an exclusively Puritan concern. It is this question, however, that the Puritans addressed in the form of the *sylogismus practicus*, which we shall discuss below. Goodwin no less than Calvin, Beza or Perkins, insists on double predestination (election to salvation and reprobation), but, like Perkins, prefers to speak of the decree to reprobate as passive rather than active, as in election to salvation.⁵ It was precisely because of the anxieties born of inquiries into one's own election that Goodwin and other Puritan divines insisted on a distinction between the faith of recumbency (looking to Christ set forth) and the faith of assurance.⁶ In order to discover how Goodwin attempted to resolve the tension between predestination's comfort and its anxiety, we must first note the placement of predestination within the system of English Calvinism.

Predestination in English Puritanism Generally

Much of the modern scholarship concerning the relationship of Calvin to the Calvinists rests upon an assumption made popular by nineteenth-century rationalistic historians of dogma. Muller singles out the Hegelian tradition of historical theologians. "According to Schweizer's reading of the older dogmatics, the orthodox Reformed theologians attempted to build a synthetic, deductive, and therefore irrefutable system of theology upon the primary proposition of an

absolute divine decree of predestination”⁷ That thesis was revised in the last two and a half decades to regard Beza as the one who was responsible for turning Calvin’s essentially christocentric system into a rigid scholasticism that emphasized predestination and reprobation⁸ Nicholas Tyacke is a cautious adherent of this thesis Referring to this allegedly significant and uniform removal of predestination from christology to theology proper, Tyacke argues,

It was their [the Puritans'] far more speculative and deterministic account of predestination that heightened spiritual tensions and made it necessary to look for further argument to buttress assurance, chiefly drawn from experience or introspection in a manner that was foreign to Calvin The inner tensions of reformed theology and the attacks of Roman Catholics led to a much greater degree of rational explanation of the biblical foundations underneath the confident assertions of reformed apologists It was these pressures, rather than impossible antinomies in Calvin [as Perry Miller suggests], that led to increasing interest in a theology of the covenants in Perkins and a covenant theology in later Puritans⁹

And yet is not the placement of predestination determined by the intent of the particular work in question, Calvin assuming rather than asserting a christological focus in his polemical defenses of predestination, and Beza placing it under christology in his Confession?¹⁰ As Muller points out, some place the discussion under christology (Keckermann, Walaeus, the “Leiden Synopsis,” John Downhame), others under ecclesiology (Ursinus, Danaeus, Perkins)¹¹ The discussion of predestination finds its way into William Ames’s *Marrow*¹² in only one chapter rather late into book one, after the discussion of faith, God, sin, and the person and work of Christ Not only is it not an organizing principle, Ames does not even see it as essential to discuss before going on to other topics, it is not even discussed under the significant section on the decree In fact, the doctrine of predestination is raised after discussing the application of redemption and arriving at the question, “Why is redemption applied to some and not to others?”¹³ It is a practical, not

speculative, question, and it is linked to the person and work of Christ the Mediator, not to abstract metaphysics¹⁴

Surely Ames is highly representative, even formative, in the development of English Calvinism, and yet predestination is clearly not central, even though he employs the scholastic method. While it is too much to say, as J. D. Eusden remarked, “One comes upon it [predestination] in the *Marrow* almost as a reluctant appendage,”¹⁵ its placement and its importance do not seem to justify the conclusion that the Puritans represent a neat and tidy scholastic, experimental predestinarianism in which the abstract consideration of predestination and the divine decree was linked to the study of the divine essence rather than to christology.

That the Reformed Scholastics were willing to “plunder the Egyptians” by freely employing the classical method they had learned in university did not mean that they uncritically adopted the theological substance of Thomas Aquinas or that they found shelter beneath the wings of Aristotle. For instance, Benedict Pictet (1655-1724), reflecting on the work of his predecessors at Geneva and his own task in succession to them, explained the difference between scholastic method and scholastic Roman Catholic theology. In his preface to his *Christian Theology*, Pictet laments the extent to which the medieval church had ignored Scripture in favor of philosophical subtleties and then he writes the following:

This was the reason why the wisest Reformers of the church have entirely banished the Scholastic Theology from its territories, together with its curious, vain, and often impious questions, and devoted themselves entirely to the exposition of God’s word.

Thus far, advocates of discontinuity between Calvin and the Calvinists would have to regard

Pictet as describing the magisterial Reformation itself, before the “Calvinists” returned to the Scholasticism unsympathetically described by Pictet. But not so. Pictet continues

Nevertheless, after the example of the schoolmen, or following rather the method of those who teach the arts and sciences, they were willing to reduce Theology to certain rules, and that with the greatest propriety, but then the divinity which they taught, was not derived from Aristotle and Plato, but from those purer sources--the sacred writings. These divines, however, did not all follow the same plan, though the result was the same, since they exhibited the same doctrines, defended the same truths, and confuted and overthrew the same errors. 16

Furthermore, Calvin’s placement of predestination in the 1559 *Institutes* does not appear to make it any less rigid or systematic than the presentations of later Calvinists who placed it under the doctrine of God. Similarly, Beza’s polemical defenses, like his senior’s, were very different in method and presentation from his other works. 17

The sermons, tracts and treatises of the Puritan divines offer evidence of various emphases, but as presumption and anxiety were seen as the key pastoral problems, the accent fell on faith, repentance, and conversion. Predestination was hardly central in the popular preaching of the Puritans, although such questions were raised in the pulpit and occupied a place in the private reflection of the laity. Just before Christmas, 1642, Edmund Calamy preached a sermon in which he raised and answered a question he considered fairly common

But it is not in my power to turn, unlesse I were praedestinated? I answer with Master Bradford, that we must first go to the Grammar-schoole of Repentance before we can be admitted to the University of Praedestination. It is not a dispute about Praedestination that will turn away Gods wrath, but it is the practise of humiliation and Reformation. It is most certain, that God is not the cause of any mans damnation. He found us sinners in Adam, but made none sinners. Thy perdition is of thy selfe, Oh Israel! And it is as certain, that it is not in the power of man by nature to convert himselfe. And that therefore God commands what we cannot perform, that we might thereby take notice what we should do, and what we once could do in Adam, and where we should go to get power to do that which we cannot do of our selves. Go to the Word, that hath a creating power. 18

For many divines, neither predestination nor justification was central in preaching and polemics, although they were utterly basic to their standard theological works. The interest in conversion was particularly acute at a time when the chief problem was seen as an unconverted national church.¹⁹ It was not that people did not understand predestination or justification, for the Puritan laity were well-instructed in such matters,²⁰ rather, it was that in spite of such *assensus*, there was little discernable change in the lives of men and women on a national scale. Of course, this was particularly thought to be true of the nominal conformists, but in the sermon the Puritan faithful often bore the brunt of divine wrath against the nation generally.

The christocentric character of Puritan discussions of predestination is established, for instance, in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, where the subject is placed not under providence or the doctrine of God and the decrees, but under "The Covenant of Grace and Its Mediator."²¹

Thomas Watson follows this organization for his *Body of Divinitie*, and it is rather representative of this federal theology that sought to unify all soteriological loci around the mediatorial work of Christ.²² Furthermore, a survey of popular Puritan literature reveals that practical sermons, drawing applications from the doctrinal content of favorite passages, dominate. The average layperson was not inundated with sermons and tracts on predestination.²³

The system may indeed have had a very significant place for predestination, but in popular preaching and piety, there can be little doubt that the application of redemption (humiliation, conversion, faith, repentance, graces and duties, means of grace, etc.) was the dominating influence, although the objective work of redemption itself was never far from view. Nevertheless, it is significant that in the quote from Calamy above, it was said that instead of a dispute over

predestination turning away God's wrath, it was repentance and reformation that would accomplish this. Even for a moderate (Calamy did not accept limited atonement), viewing repentance and reformation as capable of turning away divine wrath was at the very least an unfortunate expression, considered from the reformers' point of view. But it had nothing to do with federalism in general or limited atonement in particular.

Among those mediating the Reformed view to the English Puritans towered William Perkins (1558-1602), widely regarded as the English "Beza" who transformed Calvin's warm, christocentric theology into a stern, dogmatic and metaphysical system based on the *voluntas Dei* and, consequently, on the will of humans.²⁴ Nevertheless, while Perkins's method differs significantly from Calvin's, the dean of English Puritans seems not to even have adopted entirely Calvin's notion of reprobation.²⁵ Calvin was frustrated with those who accept election to salvation, but deny reprobation. "They do this very ignorantly and childishly," Calvin wrote, "since election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation."²⁶ Perkins, however, saw reprobation as God's decision "to pass by some without shewing mercy,"²⁷ a decidedly more passive definition which Calvin explicitly rejects. In fact, Calvin insisted that there is no difference between God's will and permission. He does not merely allow the damnation of the reprobate, he wills and decrees their damnation as surely as he wills and decrees the salvation of the elect.²⁸ And yet, Perkins stated unambiguously, in *An Exposition of the Symbole*, "No man is absolutely ordained to hell."²⁹ At the same time, Perkins did write, that "the decree and eternal counsel of God, concerning them both," elect and non-elect, "hath not any cause beside his will and pleasure."³⁰

Goodwin On Predestination & Anxiety

Goodwin stood in a direct line of spiritual succession from Perkins to Paul Baynes, Richard Sibbes and John Preston³¹ In fact, it was Preston's work that most impressed Goodwin and led him to gather together his mentor's writings for posthumous publication Since these forebears among the "Spiritual Brotherhood" were more pastoral than polemical, their writings reflect a practical approach to doctrinal topics and the Calvinistic theology is assumed rather than rigorously extrapolated in a systematic fashion³² Although Goodwin never wrote a system, he discussed predestination most often in the context of its relation to other themes (viz , the work of the Holy Spirit and extent of the atonement) His longest and most in-depth treatment of the doctrine appeared in the second volume of the 1683 edition of his *Works*, titled, "A Discourse of Election, of the Free and Special Grace of God Manifested therein, the Absoluteness and Unchangeableness of his Decrees, and their Infallible Accomplishment"³³

Goodwin begins to argue for election "out of the Stories of all Times, throughout Old and New Testament," not from the doctrine of God, although he is a "high Calvinist"³⁴ Selecting Romans 9-11 as his principal text, Goodwin prefers to speak of reprobation as "a Non-election or passing by [of] others"³⁵ The non-elect are "left to their hardness"³⁶ and are throughout referred to as "the Rest" Nevertheless, he is not averse to using the term, "reprobation"³⁷ As for the decrees, Goodwin accepts the common distinction between the ends and the means of election With respect to the end, the decree to elect was infralapsarian "But indeed, that all those Means to accomplish or bring us through unto the attaining of this End, they all suppose Man fallen, as to the Object of them"³⁸ Thus, the decree of election observes the elect "considered as Sinners, and as now become miserable, which by Creation they were not"³⁹ Besides "Christ considered as a

Redeemer,” Goodwin is not interested in speculative questions about the decree. Following Polanus, he is anxious to guard the christocentric character of election, insisting that although the end (God’s glory) is decreed without consideration of humanity as fallen, even there it is “in Christ” that the decree inheres.⁴⁰

The Reformed scholastics were agreed on a distinction between the end and the means, but not all divines could agree over whether the decree was constituted in infralapsarian or supralapsarian terms. Keckerman, Goodwin points out, was among those who tried to reconcile the distinction, arguing that the end of the decree was “Life Eternal.”⁴¹ If that is the case, surely the Fall cannot be considered the means to that end, since it was rather an impediment. And yet, if the Fall is itself a means of requiring redemption, then, by foreknowledge of the this state, God made the Fall a prerequisite for redemption. Therefore, in that sense, Keckerman could understand how the end and the means of the decree could be reconciled by an infralapsarian perspective.⁴²

Goodwin agrees with Keckerman and, with him, Junius, Piscator and Bishop Davenant, but insists on the distinction still between the decree unto the end (God’s glory), which is not predicated on the Fall, and the decree unto the means (redemption), which is so predicated.⁴³ Nevertheless, God decreed both the end (*terminus a quo*) and the means from everlasting, so that this question concerns simply the execution of the same, single decree, not a succession of decrees with a temporal reference.⁴⁴

The import of this question lies in the assertion that sin cannot be the *terminus a quo* of the decree and, therefore, if the end of the decree is different from the means, each must have its own reference point. But the debate between supralapsarians and infralapsarians was concerned with the means of the decree. Here, Goodwin affirms, “And his Decree to the Means [is] upon his fall

Condition And this is it that I affirm ”⁴⁵ Therefore, Goodwin is an infralapsarian Calvinist As always with the Puritans, the interest in such questions is its “use,” and in this case, knowledge of this subject is essential in order to recognize “the Infinity of Grace and Condescension in God, The High and Lofty One, to ordain such an Union and Communication with Himself, of Us his Creatures, who are at such a Distance from him as we Creatures, and more then doubly Infinite Grace, in that we are also Sinners ”⁴⁶

Goodwin highlights the glory of election by contrasting it with reprobation For instance, God is said to take no delight in the death of the wicked This is because God finds no pleasure in this as an end in itself, whereas the elect’s salvation in itself causes him to rejoice ⁴⁷ From this Goodwin makes a very important point, especially considering his place as an advocate for high Calvinism

And therefore most assuredly the Matter of Election and Reprobation is not stated well by those who say, That Mens Damnation and Reprobation, and Mans Salvation in Election, do stand in a like Posture or Reference in God’s intention, that is, intended by God upon like terms, for his own Glories sake No there is an infinite difference, for besides the Tendency which our Salvation hath unto his Glory, it was also intended by God simply and directly in it self, as his End, though inferiour to his own Glory, but that of Damnation was never intended by him for it self, as an End which he delights in ⁴⁸

Goodwin therefore carefully nuances his discussion of predestination Here we have a federal Calvinist distinguishing between election and reprobation in terms of their relationship to divine intention and the end toward which they tend Salvation being an end in itself in which God takes delight and from which he receives everlasting glory, reprobation only serves God’s glory indirectly This point has no small implication for the anxiety involved with predestination To

the extent that one emphasizes the parity of election and reprobation in terms of divine involvement (an active rather than passive decree in the case of reprobation) and the end toward which it tends (reprobation directly glorifying God as much as election), the anxieties concerning one's own plight are likely to expand. If God is just as glorified in my damnation as in my salvation and just as actively decrees destruction as well as life, what confidence can I have that my salvation interests him?

Goodwin realizes the tension involved here and this is why he takes the time to clearly distinguish the nature and end of the decrees. It is neither speculative nor metaphysical, but pastoral, in its intention. But even greater evidence for Goodwin's pastoral interest in relieving the anxiety over predestination and assurance is the fact that he passes through the discussion of God's essential character in order to get to "the Security the consideration of Christ's Person, his Relation to us, and Office for us, affords to our Faith," as a result of the knowledge of election. After all, Christ is the Head in whom the elect are chosen. "In his Person, you know he is the Son of God in our Nature, God's Christ. And as considered such, constituted and made an Head and Husband unto us, who are his Fellows, chosen to be one with him, God's Christ, or anointed over us, and to us, as an Head who hath by his Merits purchased all for us."⁴⁹ The christocentric focus of Goodwin's discussion underscores the caricature of Reformed scholasticism that has too often been made in the discontinuity scholarship.⁵⁰

Goodwin also discusses election and predestination extensively in his exposition of Ephesians, and there he simply follows the apostle's own structure. Aside from this exposition, Goodwin discusses election in connection with "Christ the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace," as

we have already shown to be an organizing feature of the Puritan system

How does Goodwin's organization compare with his colleagues? Is this christocentric approach, centering on Christ's priestly office, unique to Goodwin and an exception to the general Puritan tendency? In his *Larger Catechism*, John Owen does place election under "The Works of God" (i.e., the decrees), and yet embraces an infralapsarian position⁵¹ But in his very brief *Lesser Catechism*, although there is a question on "The Works of God," the only reference to election falls under the offices of Christ⁵² Thus, early Puritanism does not seem to be any more occupied with predestination than the Reformed orthodox on the Continent, Calvin, or even for that matter, Luther and the broad evangelical consensus Christopher Hill was convinced that justification was Perkins' chief doctrine and concern⁵³ Muller argues, "The central issue of Perkins' soteriology is God's grace as it is mediated in Christ,"⁵⁴ and that seems to be apparent in the *Golden Chaine* and *Armillia* as well as in his sermons⁵⁵ It is all the more striking then that scholars would continue to represent Puritanism as an exception to the christocentrism of the reformers⁵⁶ This being the background, what was Goodwin's placement of predestination and what sort of place was it given in his system?

One thread of continuity running from Calvin through Beza and the Puritans is the trinitarian emphasis This is important for relating predestination to assurance for a number of reasons First, if the discussion were speculative and metaphysical rather than christocentric, one's search for assurance from predestination would become the "labyrinth" about which Calvin warned⁵⁷ Those who defend the discontinuity thesis point to Calvin's insistence that one find his or her election only in Christ as the mirror and contrast this with an allegedly subjective view that requires the inquirer to look within oneself as the mirror⁵⁸ A purely speculative philosophical approach

would surely achieve this result, but is this what we find in Goodwin and his colleagues? Do they, as James B. Torrance argues,⁵⁹ substitute philosophical speculation and introspective inferences for a trinitarian explanation of predestination? Not only is the theme Christ the Mediator central throughout the tradition, the soteriological discussions are wrapped around a trinitarian structure. The Puritans employed the trinitarian formula in their organization of the Reformed system. As Joel Beeke observed, Beza “fleshed out Calvin’s explicit trinitarian framework, while remaining true to Calvin’s christocentricity.”⁶⁰

Beza’s project of “fleshing out” the trinitarianism of the system, mediated by Perkins, is followed by Thomas Goodwin with marvelous precision, but hardly rigid scholasticism. At every turn, Goodwin wants to insist that we trust not only in Christ, but in God the Father and the Holy Spirit, since each member of the Trinity is working in tandem for the salvation of the elect.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Christ is the particular object of justifying faith. It is he, in his mediatorial work, who leads believers to the Trinity and their complementary activities in redemption.⁶²

Goodwin’s Christocentric Approach To The Decree

In his anthropology, Goodwin opens with a defense of the creature-Creator distinction, in opposition to pantheism and it is significant that he does not reach immediately for predestination or for a metaphysical scheme, but appeals immediately and directly to texts emphasizing divine transcendence, eternity, immortality, immutability, and omniscience--traditional catholic categories.⁶³ He does go into a discussion of whether all things were in God’s foreknowledge and decree in *esse volito*, as Aquinas held, but this is all for the purpose of defending the Creator-creature distinction and it does not serve a primary role even at that

Goodwin does not appear to have any interest in probing into the divine essence, (“Nor is my scope simply to set forth what God is in himself, ”) but moves quickly to the distinction between Christ and the creature, particularly as to the former’s eternity, demonstrating once more the deeply christological and exegetical focus, “ limiting my discourse herein, also, only unto what description he makes of himself here in the text ”⁶⁴ And even this distinction, the closest Goodwin comes to doing metaphysical philosophy, is calculated for piety rather than for speculation “The use to which I shall put it will be, to humble us as creatures, even in our best estate and not as sinners only ”⁶⁵ Furthermore, even Goodwin’s discussion of creation has a soteriological focus “My design in this discourse [*On the First Estate of Men and Angels by their Creation*] is, in the end, to magnify the supercreation grace of God in election, and the glory of Christ as our head and a Saviour, which was to be revealed upon our fallen condition, though ordained afore all worlds ”⁶⁶ It is not the doctrine of God that receives Goodwin’s primary focus--even in discussing the decree and creation--but rather the soteriological ends and trinitarian outworking of the decree organize the entire system

Like most Puritan divines, Goodwin is anxious to mark out the application or “use” of each doctrine and obedience clearly has primacy in terms of its aim⁶⁷ While the doctrine of election is useful for holiness, the latter is not the central motif in Goodwin’s discussion of the former Election, or God’s “eternal love,” according to Goodwin, “ was the original, the spring, the fountain, the cause of justification, and all else ”⁶⁸ It serves its place in the system, not as an organizing principle or as a central motif in a metaphysical, scholastic scheme, but as part of a christocentric emphasis on redemption by the Trinity through the mediation of Christ Election cannot even be discussed apart from Christ and the incarnation “And it was yet a greater condescension to ordain his eternal Son to dwell in human nature, and that nature to become one

person with him, which was the fundamental decree of all, for we are chosen in Christ as our head, Eph 1:3”⁶⁹ The hypostatic union is “the fundamental decree of all”⁷⁰

At this point, those who follow the discontinuity thesis would have to read Goodwin as an enigma or, at least, an exception to the rule among the Puritans. Surely his exceptionally christocentric and exegetical explanation of predestination, should one regard it as indeed exceptional even after the arguments above, would be attended by a correspondingly single predestinarian position and an affirmation of *gratis universalis*, at least in reference to the scope of the atonement.⁷¹ Nevertheless, Goodwin is comfortable discussing reprobation, the order of the decrees, and the limited scope of the atonement. “I will choose him to life, saith the Father, but he will fall, and so fall short of what my love designed to him, but I will redeem him, says the Son, out of that lost estate”⁷² Therefore, God will not merely offer redemption to the unregenerate, but will come to each elect individual “and cause him to accept it”⁷³ As we shall see, Goodwin does not hesitate to zealously promote the particularism of the atonement within the covenantal framework.

The importance of this discussion becomes clear when we begin to search for assurance of predestination. If the discontinuity thesis is upheld, there is in Puritanism nothing outside of the believer’s own rationalistic speculation that can secure assurance.⁷⁴ If one begins with a scholastic approach, probing the divine essence, and then proceeds to discern assurance concerning one’s own election by following a syllogism by which the decree is determined through its effects, Christ is no longer the mirror of election.⁷⁵ The believer is left to a cold, rationalistic system that can hardly comfort the struggling believer in his or her own particular election.⁷⁶ But if the discussion is centered around Christ and the trinitarian outworking of salvation, discontinuity proponents

argue, the objective anchor of assurance holds fast⁷⁷ This was Calvin's view, but was radically altered by the English Calvinists through Beza and Perkins, it is argued⁷⁸ However, we have seen that Goodwin, in continuity with other representative colleagues we have included, makes the entire discussion of predestination turn on Christ the Mediator and the trinitarian scheme If Goodwin and the English Calvinists substituted doubt for certainty, it cannot be imputed to the method by which the predestinarian scheme was organized

The Syllogismus Practicus

In order to answer the question of the relationship of predestination and anxiety, we must analyze the notion of the "practical syllogism" and its pastoral effects The practical syllogism came into wide use among the Continental and English divines by the 1570's⁷⁹ and it went as follows The elect evidence the grace of God in good works But I evidence the grace of God in good works Therefore, I am elect⁸⁰ This syllogism is stated in various ways, but with these essential elements The reality of saving faith is discerned by the believer by following what Perkins called a "golden chaine" from obvious evidences to the conclusions⁸¹ This, once again, is not a new development (and departure) among Calvin's successors First, the practice is seen in Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon⁸²

The practical syllogism, therefore, is not inconsistent with the theology of the magisterial reformers and does not represent the slightest departure from their insistence on the necessary relationship between faith and its fruit Nevertheless, there is in the development of the Reformed application a growing link between the syllogism and predestination Interestingly, one of the changes from Edward's Forty-Two Articles to Elizabeth's Thirty-Nine (1571) was that the line, "although the Decrees of predestination are unknowen unto us," was dropped and it has been suggested that this may be due to the growing interest in discovering one's election through the

practical syllogism⁸³

The *syllogismus practicus* is also acknowledged and employed by John Calvin⁸⁴ What Calvin, like Luther, objected to was any attempt to make such visible evidences the *foundation* for assurance⁸⁵ But this is also a warning clearly supplied by William Ames⁸⁶

Therefore, the practical syllogism is nothing new for Beza and the Puritans the change is not theological, but pastoral It is a problem of emphasis, not of consensus While there can be no question that Calvin did not employ the syllogism with the rigor that characterizes the Puritans, there is no doctrinal departure involved, and this is significant for the discontinuity thesis R T Kendall, for instance, insists that Beza is responsible for the shift from Christ to the practical syllogism in the Puritans⁸⁷ But if the syllogism, in its essence, may be reconciled with Calvin (indeed, even Luther), surely the discontinuity lies not in any shift in doctrine from Calvin to the “Calvinists,” but in the degree to which it figures in pastoral ministry and the manner in which it is expressed in attaining assurance The Puritans agree with Calvin, as does Beza, that good works cannot form the foundation of assurance any more than of the faith of recumbency itself⁸⁸ Furthermore, the only reason that the Puritans can make the practical syllogism necessary to assurance is that they believe, unlike Calvin, that assurance is not of faith’s essence, but a distinct reflexive act⁸⁹ The “faith of recumbency” is looking only to Christ, while the “faith of assurance” is the subject’s awareness of the faith of recumbency⁹⁰ If the Puritans had maintained that faith and assurance were one and the same, they would never have allowed a practical syllogism to serve as the means of arriving at justifying faith It is precisely because the syllogism serves assurance in distinction from faith itself that they are not building justification on works Beeke makes this point clearly “When Beza pointed first to sanctification for assurance, he never

intended its priority in significance despite the claims of Barth, Bray, and Kendall, rather, he began with the 'lowest order' in order to reach the higher realization of Christ, God's promise, and election"⁹¹ In other words, proponents of the discontinuity thesis wrongly assume that *beginning* with sanctification is equivalent to making that the *foundation*, the latter of which is flatly condemned by Calvin⁹² But this fails to see the point made explicit in Perkins' "golden chaine," which begins with the most meagerly and unimpressive effects, and works its way to the cause It is the cause that is most important and Christ who is the foundation for both righteousness and assurance, but the matter of obtaining assurance must begin wherever one may When one begins with the least and remotest effects to the source, that is hardly making the former the most important As Goodwin reminds us, it is by discerning the slightest evidence of saving faith that one can be comforted, but the evidences are never the end, they are only means toward a weak assurance finding a strong Savior⁹³ We receive assurance of grace from graces, but not grace itself⁹⁴

Once more, it is impossible to simply discuss the notion of a particular doctrine or pastoral practice apart from raising the issue of method Those who emphasize discontinuity argue that the practical syllogism arises from the new attachment of the Reformed scholastics to Aristotelian method (although Ramists,⁹⁵ clearly opposed to Aristotelians, also employed the syllogism) As the discontinuity argument goes, Calvin was a scriptural theologian who made no room for such subtleties, it was Beza, once again, who returned the churches to Aristotle after their emancipation under Calvin⁹⁶ As Muller points out, Zanchi did not embrace the practical syllogism, and yet "It is Zanchi who was the first of the successor theologians to place the doctrine of predestination definitively into relation with the doctrine of God in the order and arrangement of the system," so once again the "link" between the placement of predestination in the system and the practical

sylogism is unfounded⁹⁷ What is more Aristotelian in its use of terms such as “necessity” and the nature of causes than *De servo arbitrio*? And yet Luther is not excoriated as proto-Bezan

Calvin on many occasions employed Aristotle in the service of God⁹⁷ To be sure, Calvin, like Luther (and like the Reformed scholastics), had no use for the “schoolmen” who wanted to avoid the clear propositions of Scripture with the “sophistry” of Aristotelian categories and abstractions⁹⁸ It was the appeal to such categories as tactical evasions of the plain face of things, not as legitimate, useful and existing categories, that concerned the reformers Luther appeals to Aristotelian categories of necessity and contingency, sufficiency and efficiency and the various types of causation (formal, material, instrumental, efficient) throughout his work and there is not a single reformer who departs from this usual way of doctrinal discussion⁹⁹ The syllogistic way of argument was not ruled out by the reformers, but had been much abused, twisted, and manipulated to rationalize away the clear message of Scripture, they charged¹⁰⁰

Thomas Goodwin's Use of the Syllogismus Practicus

Thomas Goodwin represents a growing concern among a number of Puritan divines that the *Christus extra nos* emphasis was being eroded by a subjective tendency This is detected once more in his rather lukewarm attitude toward the practical syllogism At first, this might appear to be a rather odd comment, since it is usually the case that those Puritans who especially appreciated the practical syllogism were looking for *objective* verification and those who stressed the *sylogismus mysticus* (a direct testimony of the Holy Spirit) were more interested in a *subjective* witness to their assurance However, as we shall argue under the discussion of conversion, both syllogisms may be regarded as subjective if the alternative is the “naked promise” to which alone both the faith of recumbency and the faith of assurance look for refuge¹⁰¹

Like Calvin, Goodwin sees knowledge as inseparable from faith, and specifically, it is knowledge of Christ as he is “set forth” as crucified for our sins, raised for our justification, and seated at God’s right hand for our intercession, that produces and increases faith. When people are struggling with doubts and seek greater assurance, Goodwin does not turn them immediately to graces as evidence in a golden chain, he takes the person immediately to the scenic outlook where he or she becomes, first of all, a spectator of Christ and his benefits. This direct approach to the objective work of Christ was not new among the Puritans,¹⁰² it was an emphasis that stands in sharp contrast to the one that can be found, for instance, in the counsel of a later divine, and a student of Goodwin’s, Joseph Alleine. “Whether it be your baptism, or whatever else you pretend, I tell you from the living God, that if any of you be a prayerless person, or a scoffer, or a lover of evil company (Prov xiii 20), in a word, if you are not a holy, strict, and self-denying Christian, you cannot be saved (Heb xii 14, Mt xv 14)”¹⁰³ In fact, the true believer may not be perfect in action, but certainly is such “in desire and endeavour”¹⁰⁴ The congregation is urged, on the one hand, to refuse the comfort of works and, on the other, to discern by those very works whether conversion has truly taken place. Of course, this can be explained as referring to two different exercises of faith: the faith of recumbency (justifying faith) refusing the comfort of works, while the faith of assurance requires them for rest. Nevertheless, for anyone untrained in such subtle distinctions, one wonders how confusing such language might have been for even well-taught laypeople. For instance, in a 1654 treatise on assurance, Thomas Brooks commends the example of Mistress Honiwood of Kent. Her conscience tormented by a lack of assurance, this pious woman would often cry out, “I am damned! I am damned!” When various believers would attempt to cheer her, she would offer them wine and on one occasion, upon their departure, she “threw the Venice glass against the ground, saying, ‘As sure as this glass will break, so surely am I

damned ” Brooks relates, “The glass rebounded from the ground without any harm, which one of the ministers suddenly caught in his hand, and said, ‘Behold, a miracle from heaven to confute your unbelief, Oh! tempt God no more, tempt God no more ’”¹⁰⁵ One wonders with what anxieties similar pious souls had to remain when their glasses were less fragile. Other examples are cited of a similar nature and then Brooks concludes the following

Poor I, that am but of yesterday, have known some that have been so deeply plunged in the gulf of despair, that they would throw all the spiritual cordials that have been tendered to them against the walls. They were strong in reasoning against their own souls, and resolved against everything that might be a comfort and support to them. They have been much set against all ordinances and religious services, they have cast off holy duties themselves, and peremptorily refused to join with others in them, yea, they have, out of a sense of sin and wrath, which hath lain hard upon them, refused the necessary comforts of this life .¹⁰⁶

Although Brooks seeks to comfort the despairing, the path to assurance he commends is nevertheless continued “use” of duties. He encourages them to “look up to the mercy-seat” and to rest in Christ, but one wonders if this was always an easy thing to do when assurance was emphasized as a difficult gift to attain, through strenuous activity. The presence of such examples, cited by Puritans themselves, points up a sense of anxiety over personal election that is directly challenged by Calvin.¹⁰⁷ In these examples from Brooks and the sermon from Alleine, representative of some of the Puritan literature, Christ himself as the object of justifying faith is obscured by the prominence of imperatives to be converted and often the Law is confused with the Gospel, as Gospel indicatives become imperatives. The promise thus becomes a command. This, however, is not the doing of Theodore Beza, who, in his *Confessio*, had a section on the distinction between Law and Gospel, insisting that “ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the principle sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt Christianity ”¹⁰⁸ While the preaching of the Gospel does not abolish the preaching of the Law, when it comes to the point of obtaining righteousness and a clear conscience, the Gospel alone promises and the Law

condemns 109

It was not the doctrine of predestination itself that caused such anxieties, but rather the nature of true conversion and saving faith. The Reformation doctrine of faith relieved many anxieties, but it also was the occasion for new ones. Mark the following counsel from Luther:

Therefore when you feel your sin, when your bad conscience smites you, or when persecution comes, then ask yourself whether you really believe. At such times one is wont to run to saints and helpers in cloisters and in the desert for succor and relief, crying 'O dear man, intercede for me! O dear saint, help me! O let me live! I promise to become pious and do many good works!' That is how a terrified conscience speaks. But tell me, where is faith?¹¹⁰

This is the very question the Puritans sought to answer with the *sylogismus practicus*. It was not predestination that troubled their conscience as much as the answer to Luther's question, "But tell me, where is faith?" The Puritans were not trying to save themselves by the syllogism, they simply wanted to be certain that they had true, saving faith, and the best route to that assurance they thought to be by discerning faith's "footprints," rather than its essence. It is precisely because election was a divine secret and part of God's hidden essence into which the curious were not to probe that the practical syllogism was employed.¹¹¹ Instead of seeking out the decree through metaphysical speculation, the believer was to limit his or her inquiry to that which God had revealed, namely, the evidences of the decree in objective testimony. As Perkins declared, "I speak this [practical syllogism] not to make men secure and to content themselves with these small beginnings in grace, but only to show how any may assure themselves that they are at least babes in Christ."¹¹²

We see a slight shift in emphasis between the English Reformers and Puritans, on one hand, and

the more preparationistic orientation that began to develop in the seventeenth century. For Tyndale, the main purpose of teaching predestination is that by it “our justifying and salvation are clean taken out of our hands”¹¹³. In some limited respects, there are two different pastoral applications of the same doctrine. In the mid-sixteenth century, John Bradford was warning the “free-willers” against “the most pestilent papistical poison of doubting of God’s favour” and comforts believers not with *hopes* of being elect, but certainty, “as most certainly he hath [chosen you],” he writes to a lady “Ah! mine own dear heart, Christ only, and his mercy and truth, in him and for him is the cause of your election”¹¹⁴. But, of course, by the early seventeenth century, “doubting God’s favour” was not just a “papistical poison,” and pastoral practice had to adjust. Anthony Gilby, in a 1556 treatise on election, wrote in a vein similar to Tyndale and Bradford

Because that wythoute some tayste of thys divine providence in predestination, there can be no faithe, but either doubtful waveringe, leading to despaire, whyche we have felt in the papistrye whyles we looked to our owne weakness and infirmitie, not able to endure one howre in the waye of ryghtousnes, or els a vane presumption of fained holiness, whyls we beholde our owne believe, and good works, or the perfection that we do ymagyn in our own selves, as do the Anabaptistes¹¹⁵

For both Bradford and Gilby, representative of an entire generation and very much in the same vein as their Continental colleagues, the doctrine of predestination is meant to bring security to those suffering from a “papistical” notion of doubt. It is interesting that Goodwin’s criticisms of some of the directions among his own contemporaries sound a bit like Gilby’s criticisms of Rome. Bradford and Gilby do not represent a different *tradition* in England, siding with Calvin over some other influence, they represent a different *generation* in England, a generation that used predestination to buttress the security provided by the doctrine of justification. But their successors

faced a crisis on a different front. The following generation, as we saw from the examples in the previous chapter, began to reconsider the pastoral response to doubt. The doctrine remained the same, but those who despaired of knowing their election were given “helps” through the “golden chain.” However, by this third generation--Goodwin’s--a practice that was meant to console ended up creating a new despair fueled in some cases by morbid introspection. Wallace argues that Goodwin’s *A Discourse on Election* had an important role in the development of high Calvinism. His treatment of predestination “showed greater circumspection than was true of many of the high Calvinists.” Further,

Thomas Goodwin also rooted predestination in various ‘motives’ within the Godhead, in connection with his understanding of the interrelationships of the persons of the Trinity. But the intention to exalt God’s grace was foremost, as Thomas Goodwin considered grace to be ‘the most absolute principle’ in the divine being.¹¹⁶

Furthermore, Goodwin realizes the motive behind the practical syllogism: not only has the Reformers’ view of assurance as part of faith’s essence heightened anxiety, there is some anxiety now over whether one was included in the covenant made with Christ on behalf of the elect before the foundation of the world. What should the believer do when he or she begins to despair of being “elect”? Rather than bringing out the practical syllogism, Goodwin proclaims Christ’s present heavenly intercession.¹¹⁷ Instead of concluding of Christ’s death on behalf of the elect that “because it is done and past, [the believer] knows not how to take it in believing, when it wanteth assurance that Christ died for him, though he should come to Christ to be saved by virtue of his death,” the struggling believer ought to remember this: “But there is one work that remains still to be done by him for us, and which he is daily a-doing, and that is, interceding, for he lives ever to intercede or to pray for us, in the strength and merit of that his sacrifice once offered up.”¹¹⁸ This

will increase assurance, but in coming to Christ for justification, “the proper act of such a faith (as it is distinguished from faith of assurance) [is] a casting one’s self upon Christ for something it would have done for one ”¹¹⁹

But far from endangering any hope of assurance, Goodwin is convinced that an understanding of predestination normally encourages it. After all, “That which keeps men off” is the idea that Christ came “so that men might be rendered saveable if they will.” “Hast thou a mind?” Goodwin replies. “He that came down from heaven to die for thee, will meet thee more than half way, as the prodigal’s father is said to do, by his Spirit he will send him from heaven to thee, and at the latter day himself will come again to fetch thee and receive thee to himself. O therefore come in unto him. If you knew his heart you would ”¹²⁰ But therein lay the very problem. Who knows God’s heart? One can gather from these general promises a great deal about God’s merciful disposition, but how can one know that he or she is that prodigal son who will be embraced by the joyful father? Since knowing his mind is impossible (did Calvin not also caution against prying into the secret will?), we are ostensibly left without any possibility of assurance--unless we can trace the effects inductively back to their cause, hence, the practical syllogism.

Goodwin offers a reason why predestination renders the question of assurance so acute. “Men do not so usually question the power of God, he is able enough to save them they think, but all their doubts are about his will ”¹²¹ One might argue that Calvin did not think that predestination rendered it necessary for one to go any further than looking to Christ as “the mirror” of his election, but that does not answer two very important questions. First, whether Calvin believed in particular redemption or not, did he make predestination a prominent doctrine? Regardless of where he chose to discuss it in the *Institutes*, it cannot be denied that the doctrine was as essential

for Calvin's soteriology as for his successors' 122 Second, did the doctrine end up creating the anxiety, regardless of whether Calvin thought it should? The answer to that question is obvious from the fact that it became an acute question even in the congregations of people such as Calamy, who did not even believe in particular redemption 123 Therefore, the Puritans and their Continental associates sought to think through an appropriate pastoral response to a growing existential crisis

Goodwin knows the nature of this crisis Few question God's goodness or his power, objectively considered The uncertainty comes when one particularizes God's will to oneself Has he chosen to be good *to me*? Is it his will to exercise his power in saving *me*? Just as the question of possessing true saving faith can raise doubts without introducing the subject of predestination, predestination, by itself--without any allegedly new accretions such as federal theology (esp limited atonement)--accentuates these questions However, Goodwin does come closer to Calvin's response than some of his fellow Puritans, even though he emphasizes the Puritan distinction between justifying faith and assurance Instead of turning people immediately to external proofs of the *believer's* activity (evidences which both Calvin¹²⁴ and Goodwin would nevertheless have endorsed in theory, taken *a posteriori*), Goodwin turns the anxious believer to the external proofs of *God's* activity in Christ

(1) His journey from heaven to earth, (2) his Father sent him for this purpose, (3) his immutable decrees, (4) the covenant of redemption, made between the Godhead, (5) our salvation is Christ's reward, (6) God had better opportunities to abort his plan than this or that sin in your life, for "To pardon sinners is more natural to him than to kill his Son was unnatural", (7) his death was the last will and testament, (8) God only injures himself is one of the elect is lost, (9) the unity of Godhead, (10) election of the believer in Christ returns the focus to Christ, in whom we find our election, (11) Christ's incarnation the hypostatic union becomes itself an everlasting tribute to God's dedication to the redemption of sinners 125

Instead of apologizing for predestination as though it were a liability to assurance that one

nevertheless had to assume, Goodwin believes that God's will and power to save the elect, combined with the general offer extended to all of humanity as "sinners" for whom Christ came to die, provides greater incentive for people to trust immediately in Christ

That which keeps men off is, that they know not Christ's mind and heart. Think it not to be an indifferent thing to him whether you believe or no, as if he came into the world to do this duty of dying for sinners singly in obedience to his Father, so that men might be rendered saveable if they will, and that however, if they will not, he yet hath enough to satisfy and quiet himself with, even this, that he shall be glorified in what he hath done, though few or none of the sons of men be saved. It is a prejudicial doctrine this to the salvation of men, and derogatory to Christ's free love. What, do we think that Jesus Christ is gone to heaven, there to complain unto angels of the unkindness and hardness of men's hearts, that will not turn to him notwithstanding he hath done so much, and to tell what he had done for them, and what they would not be persuaded to do for themselves, and that so he can sufficiently please himself with such just complaints? Hast thou a mind? He that came down from heaven, as himself saith in the text, to die for thee, will meet thee more than half way, as the prodigal's father is said to do, by his Spirit he will send him from heaven to thee, and at the latter day himself will come again to fetch thee and receive thee to himself. O therefore come in unto him. If you knew his heart you would.¹²⁶

But, as noted previously, that is just the rub. How can one know his heart? The average Puritan response in the early seventeenth century would have been to ask the person, "Do you have the smallest beginnings in love to God and neighbor? Do you make use of the means of grace the Word and sacrament? Do you feel within yourself the desire to know God as he has revealed himself in Christ? Are you grateful for your salvation and willing to repent of your sins?"¹²⁷ An affirmative answer to any one of these questions would have met with an encouraging reply and the doubting believer could have concluded that he "knew Christ's heart" toward him individually and personally, by tracing the "golden chain" to its origin. This would have been as true of Calvinists within English Conformity as well as Puritan Nonconformists.¹²⁸

Goodwin does not think that this is wrong in theory, but he is convinced that the practice is

clearly out of hand, with the casuistry involved replacing the objective promise. Therefore, his counsel is notably different in emphasis. The inquirer may know Christ's heart because of the bare, naked promise. Christ came to save sinners, and everything God did to secure redemption should be more than sufficient to convince the doubter. But to emphasize both that Christ died for sinners *and* that Christ died only for the elect raises the question, Did he die for me, this particular elect sinner? This is precisely the point that Kendall makes with regard to the anxiety brought about by the federal doctrine of limited atonement.¹²⁹ But again, if God's will in predestination is limited, and his activity in effectual grace is limited in scope, and, as Kendall argues, the heavenly intercession of Christ is limited to the elect,¹³⁰ the potential for anxiety over one's predestination is hardly assuaged. One need only acknowledge predestination itself (indeed, only single predestination) and these same questions arise. The anxiety is not brought about because of a doctrinal shift or revision from Calvin to the Calvinists, but was there implicitly all along. It is the Puritans and their Continental contemporaries who are developing a pastoral means of dealing with the question raised by the Reformed theology they received.

It is interesting to note that Goodwin's pastoral advice to struggling believers is closest to Calvin's (Christ set forth objectively) via an argument that is farthest from Calvin's. The distinction between faith and assurance. "Christ came to save sinners" is sufficient as an object of faith, even though one does not know immediately whether he or she is that sinner for whom Christ came. And it is sufficient for one reason: faith is not assurance. The *pro me* part of the reformers' definition of faith is only necessary for the reflex act of faith: assurance.¹³¹ One might logically wonder how one could know the heart of Christ--whether Christ intended to save him or her particularly if that redemptive intention is not universal--but that is a theological question and not

a historical one. The fact is, in spite of what we might suppose to follow from such convictions, Goodwin and others like him instructed individuals to look to the promise, which is universal, rather than to the secret decree. More shall be said about this in the discussion of the covenant and justification.

Although Goodwin embraces the *concept* of a practical syllogism and does not deny its usefulness, he is closer to the reformers in his pastoral application of the syllogism. In fact, he develops a *sylogismus mysticus* which he believes to be vastly superior to the *sylogismus practicus*. We will deal with the *sylogismus mysticus* in greater detail in our discussion of the application of redemption. Nevertheless, it bears some reference here. When we seek assurance of our election through the “golden chaine” of evidences we discover in our lives, produced by the Holy Spirit, it is “fetching a compass with a great deal of difficulty and uncertainty”¹³². Therefore, Goodwin reports, “I resolved the reason of it into this, that it is left to the Spirit to make an immediate report of this love by impressions of it, rather than by notions, or rational arguments, or inferences”¹³³. This assurance is “but whispered unto the mind”¹³⁴. “It is too big for words,” he insists, and “this love spoken by the Spirit to the heart persuades to it without any more arguments, and will not take in the assistance of reason, or notions, or inferences”¹³⁵. In contrast to the *sylogismus practicus*, this whispering of the Spirit directly to the mind and heart “is as the north-east passage to the Indies, the shortest and speediest way of comforting and upholding the heart when found out,” and Goodwin is bold enough to say, “It is the heart, and not the understanding (for this love passeth knowledge)”¹³⁶. Before we too hastily conclude that Goodwin is directly challenging any earlier Reformation insistence on faith resting chiefly in the understanding, we must mark that Goodwin here is not addressing that question. It is not the seat

of the *actus fidei*, but the seat of this particular method of gaining assurance (recumbency), that Goodwin has in view here. Nevertheless, it is this emphasis that raises legitimate questions about the extent to which the nature-grace debate that erupted in New England between Cotton, Hutchinson and the elders simmers not far beneath the surface of English Congregationalism as well.¹³⁷ Unlike Cotton and certainly unlike Hutchinson, Goodwin does not exclude the importance of external evidences, nor does he deny that faith is a matter of the understanding, as we shall see in the discussion of that subject. He simply offers another witness that surpasses all others.¹³⁸

Some have seen this mystical tendency as a significant departure from both Calvin and the Calvinists.¹³⁹ And yet, once more, Calvin gives great place to the internal witness of the Spirit.¹⁴⁰ We should probably see Goodwin's treatment as a new emphasis rather than a new doctrinal development, as he seeks to counterbalance what he sees as an excessive dependence upon the practical syllogism. In fact, Beeke notes that, "By the 1640's the *sylogismus mysticus* had reached a degree of acceptability among the Puritans on a par with that of the *sylogismus practicus*."¹⁴¹ While Goodwin was, no doubt, motivated by a reaction against the same extremes that led to the reaction of the antinomian mystics (Saltmarsh, Eaton, et al.¹⁴²), his affirmation of external evidences, denial of eternal justification, and insistence on the traditional Puritan and Reformed notions of means preserve him from the antinomian charge. These rejections of antinomian distinctives will be considered in their proper place.

Beyond the *sylogismus mysticus*, Goodwin's use of the *sylogismus practicus* is itself significantly modified. While not denying the traditional formula, he nevertheless develops syllogisms that rest more on faith in Christ as the object than on the evidences of saving faith. For instance, one

such syllogism can be summarized as, “All who want to be reconciled shall be I want to be Therefore, I am reconciled ”¹⁴³ Such a syllogism is “practical” only in the sense that faith in the promise is exercised and there may well have been Puritans who would have found this too general, offering carnal security to the profane (although we are not aware of any such evidence), but this would have satisfied the general purposes of the syllogism to provide assurance to the *weakest* believer on the basis of the *least* sign of the Spirit’s gift of grace ¹⁴⁴

In this discussion, we have demonstrated, first of all, that Goodwin does not depart from the standard Puritan positions on predestination and the practical syllogism, although in discussing the latter, he is more reticent than many divines to employ it with rigor, and would prefer to emphasize both the objective character of the Gospel and the subjective *sylogismus mysticus* While we might discern different emphases, both in relationship to Calvin and to his fellow Calvinists, Goodwin typifies the broad range of pastoral application of a general theology that had an equally broad-range endorsement and consensus

In short, just as there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the Puritans departed from Calvin’s theology, in spite of a wide range of different uses and emphases, so Goodwin represents a position that, however a contemporary Puritan might have disagreed, would not have raised questions concerning the divine’s commitment to Calvinistic orthodoxy Even on the matter of the practical syllogism, there are notable antecedents in the use of a syllogism that has the promises of the Gospel (“All who embrace Christ will be saved But I embrace Christ Therefore, I am saved ”) rather than the evidences of practice and graces ¹⁴⁵ None other than William Perkins counseled that if neither Word nor sacraments brought comfort of assurance, one

should turn to the Holy Spirit, “Not by extraordinary revelation or enthusiasm,” which is what Goodwin came within a hair’s breadth of arguing at certain points, “but by an application of the promises of the gospel in a practical syllogism”¹⁴⁶

Furthermore, many proponents of the discontinuity thesis make a one-to-one correspondence between the practical syllogism and a denial of *sola gratia*, as if the practice would always lead to judging one’s election by a rigorous test of works¹⁴⁷ And yet, Perkins offers the following example of a practical syllogism “All such as are converted, rightly using the sacraments, shall receive Christ and His graces But I am converted, either now do or have done before rightly used the sacraments Therefore I shall receive Christ and His graces”¹⁴⁸

The elements are all there in both Calvin and the English Puritans, but Goodwin is free to draw his own applications and emphases as he assists men and women in their struggle for assurance It is also worth pointing out that the debate, for instance, in the Antinomian Controversy in New England was as much an argument over nature and grace as over works and grace Does God use natural things of this world--ink and paper, bread and wine, the physical *communio sanctorum*, preaching, reason, and the like--to bring people to faith? Or is conversion a circumvention of means?¹⁴⁹ Those who insisted upon the practical syllogism were, in effect, arguing that God’s decree is realized in time through ordinary means, those who thought they heard legalism in the growing emphasis on means were often arguing as much for mystical, immediate, intuitive and direct encounters as for grace over works¹⁵⁰ This is why the elders, in the accounts collected by David Hall, seem more worried about the “enthusiasm” implicit in Cotton, and explicit in Anne Hutchinson, than about antinomianism itself¹⁵¹

We have also demonstrated that Goodwin is an example of a highly respected Puritan divine

who, though a high Calvinist, was nevertheless profoundly exegetical and refused to discuss predestination abstractly or as part of a metaphysical, philosophical system. He accepts the system of the Reformed orthodox, often quoting Piscator, Beza, and the like, and yet his analysis of predestination and the assurance of election is directed toward a deeper understanding of Christ and his offices. Even the trinitarian focus is directed in the final analysis toward the glory of Christ. While appealing to 1 Timothy 3:4-6 for the conviction that “*opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*,”¹⁵² Goodwin nevertheless concludes that Christ “hath both in his person as God-man, and in his execution of his Father’s design in his work committed to him, ‘all treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ objectively for us to know him by, and subjectively in himself.”¹⁵³ There is concurrence with each member of the Trinity in every work of our salvation, including redemption, “which yet is appropriated in a more especial manner unto Christ.”¹⁵⁴ This context for treating predestination is consistent with the mainstream Reformed tradition from Calvin onward, as Muller has pointed out of Zwingli’s successor, whose influence on English Protestantism in general and Puritanism in particular is at least as profound as Calvin’s: “Bullinger sets forth predestination as the bridge between justification by grace alone and Christ the mediator.”¹⁵⁵

It is, therefore, misguided to drive a wedge between Calvin and Puritans like Goodwin simply because of their method or pastoral applications. Wilhelm Niesel argues that Calvin never held to a practical syllogism,¹⁵⁶ and yet Calvin, as we have seen above, certainly does affirm what came to be called the practical syllogism. Richard Muller correctly observes, “Calvin offers not a denial of the *sylogismus practicus*, but a warning against its misuse and misinterpretation.” Nevertheless, Muller concedes that Calvin taught that, “Election is not to be inferred from

works”¹⁵⁷ Both statements, however, cannot be correct. If indeed Calvin did not believe that election could be inferred from works, he surely denied the practical syllogism by implication, since that is the whole point of the syllogism. What, however, Calvin denies is the use of such evidences and inferences of human reason as the *a priori* “first foundation” of our assurance,¹⁵⁸ and this is intimately linked with his view of the relationship between faith and assurance, which differed in some respects from the popular Puritan view, held by Goodwin. It is to that subject, therefore, that we now turn.

Notes to Chapter Two

1 W. H. Griffith Thomas, ed., *The Principles of Theology: An Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles, with the text of the Articles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), p. 236.

2 *ibid.*

3 An example of an Edwardian divine who expressed the same sentiments can be found in John Bradford, a Marian martyr: “Faith of God’s election is of all things which God requireth of us, not only most principal, but also the whole sum. Let us therefore labour, study, cry, and pray for repentance and faith, and then cannot we be damned, because we are the ‘blessed of the Father’ before all worlds and therefore we believe, therefore we repent. This, I say, let us do, and not be too busy-bodies in searching the majesty and glory of God, or in nourishing doubting of salvation whereto we all are ready enough.” (*The Writings of John Bradford* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1858], vol. 2, pp. 314-16).

4 Philip Melancthon, *Melancthon on Christian Doctrine (Locī Communes, 1555)*, trans. and edited by Clyde L. Manschreck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965, reprint from Oxford University Press), Article XV, p. 188.

5 Thomas Goodwin, *The Objects and Acts of Justifying Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), vol. 8, pp. 567-8.

6 *ibid.*

7 Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, p. 1. By Muller’s accounting the Hegelian historian of doctrine, Ferdinand Christian Baur, made further use of this. The tradition is Schleiermacher--Schweizer--Baur--Gass. Then Heinrich Heppe, though negative toward this development, nevertheless accepted the central dogma theory.

8 Basil Hall, “Calvin Against The Calvinists,” in *John Calvin*, G. E. Duffield, ed. (Appleford, 1966).

9 Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 93.

10 Cf. Robert Letham, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, “Theodore Beza: A Reassessment,” vol. 40, 1987. To be sure, Beza does demonstrate a dissatisfaction with the sufficiency-efficiency

distinction (to become Dort's position) as too weak on particular redemption and his supralapsarianism carried into such implications as questioning the universal offer of the Gospel. Nevertheless, "In the *Confessio Christianae fidei*, for instance, election is not considered under the doctrine of God but is introduced under Christology, in the chapter on the accomplishment of salvation" (p 31). Letham explains Beza's emphasis on sanctification for assurance. In the *Confessio*, Beza says that since we cannot penetrate into the secret counsel of God "(didn't Calvin say the same?)" "we are to begin from the lowest level, our sanctification. True, we feel this to be incomplete, yet the fact that it is there shows us that we have faith or, rather, that Christ dwells in us through Faith" (p 33). Letham offers abundant proof that Beza viewed faith as "a persuasion which we have that the promises of salvation and eternal life belong peculiarly to us" (p 36).

11 Richard Muller, *Christ & The Decree*, *op cit*, p 4

12 William Ames, *The Marrow of Divinity*, transl from the third Latin edition (1629) by John D Eusden (Durham, N C The Labyrinth Press, 1983), p 152

13 Ames, *ibid*

14 Eusden, *ibid*, p 27

15 *ibid*

16 Benedict Pictet, *Christian Theology*, trans from the Latin by Frederick Reyroux (London R B Seeley and W Burnside, 1834), viii

17 Robert Letham, *op cit*

18 Edmund Calamy, in sermon, *op cit*, pp 79-80

19 *ibid*

20 Thomas Rogers, chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, in his *The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles* (1586), defends predestination against the charge by the Family of Love and "other sorts of heretics" who say that the teaching "filleteth all the prisons almost in England." Such groups must have been convinced that the doctrine was widespread and popularly embraced. (From the Parker Society Edition [Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1854], p 156)

21 *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 8, from *The Book of Confessions*, second edition (New York United Presbyterian Church, 1970), 6 043

22 Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1986), especially pp 154-

23 In perusing the works of Preston, Baynes and Sibbes--patriarchs of the "Spiritual Brotherhood"--one is at pains to find a single treatise on predestination, although there are references to it throughout their works. The Westminster Assembly seems to have created a new era of systematic theology, but the works chiefly characteristic of the period between Perkins and Sibbes are pastoral, practical and expository rather than attempts to organize and elucidate the Reformed system. In all of *The Works of Richard Sibbes* (Edinburgh James Nichol, 1864, volumes 1-6), there is not a single polemical or systematic theological defense of predestination. For an intriguing insight into the most provocative interests and controversies among laypeople, see Margaret Spufford's excellent work, *Contrasting Communities English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1974), especially 223 ff.

24 Cf Basil Hall, "Calvin Against The Calvinists," in *John Calvin*, G E Duffield, ed., Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology (Appleford Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966), Holmes Rolston III, "Responsible Man in Reformed Theology Calvin vs The Westminster Confession," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 23, no 2, May, 1970, p 129. These are representative statements from the discontinuity proponents and may also be found throughout R T Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism*, *op cit*.

25 Cf William Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, chapter 6 (p 15, column 1)

26 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 23 1

- 27 Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, chapter 6 (p 15, column 1)
- 28 Calvin, *ibid* , 3 23 8
- 29 Perkins, *Works*, p 279, col 1
- 30 *ibid*
- 31 Goodwin belonged to what is called the “Spiritual Brotherhood,” beginning with Perkins and running through John Preston, Paul Baynes, Richard Sibbes, Goodwin and Cotton
- 32 See footnote 23 above
- 33 Goodwin, “A Discourse Upon Election, etc ,” *Works*, vol 2 (London J Darby, J Richardson, and T Snowden, 1683) Note that this is not the Nichols’ edition, which is commonly used throughout this work
- 34 *ibid*
- 35 Goodwin, *Works, op cit* , p 19 of third treatise *ibid* , p 159, col 2 A-B
- 36 *ibid*
- 37 *ibid*
- 38 *ibid* , p 79
- 39 *ibid*
- 40 *ibid* , p 80
- 41 *ibid* , p 81
- 42 *ibid*
- 43 *ibid*
- 44 *ibid*
- 45 *ibid*
- 46 *ibid* , pp 82, 111
- 47 *ibid* , p 128
- 48 *ibid*
- 49 *ibid* , p 304
- 50 James B Torrance, in “The Concept of Federal Theology,” in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, William H Neuser, ed (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1994), makes the remarkable claim that “The federal scheme sees all under the sovereignty of God, but not under the mediatorial Headship of Christ as Man,” p 33 The Westminster Confession itself sets forth the *foedus* under the heading, “Christ The Mediator ”
- 51 Owen, *Works*, vol 1, p 474
- 52 *ibid* , p 468
- 53 Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution*, p 217
- 54 Richard Muller, *op cit* , p 168
- 55 Cf Perkins’ *Golden Chaine, op cit* , ch xiv and xv Note also his infralapsarianism In his introduction to Perkins’ *Works*, Breward makes a false dichotomy “Yet there was a certain dichotomy in Perkins’ theology between his intensely christocentric piety found in works like *A Declaration of the True Manner of Knowing Christ Crucified* and the more formally expounded christology of *Armillae Aureae* and *Exposition of the Symbole* Knappen has suggested that the puritans had a weak christology, but when their work in this area is compared with other contemporary reformed theologians there is little apparent difference It is when their statements are compared with those of Luther and Calvin that we notice a difference of balance which is to the disadvantage of the second generation systematizers” (p 98) “More formally expounded” does not equal weaker christology, as Muller has demonstrated Breward simply extends Knappen’s criticism to the entire Reformed orthodox of the period, without any apparent justification or argumentation One must not see *The Golden Chaine (Armillae Aureae)* as a systematic theology Perkins wrote it specifically as a polemical defense of predestination So why should

predestination not be central to a defense of predestination?

56 John D Eusden, into to Ames' *Marrow*, *op cit*, p 20 "The Christocentrism of Martin Luther is not shared by most English Puritans" Most similar assertions are not so baldly stated, although there is an abiding suspicion of the merit of this thesis, in spite of the fact that federalism forces everything in the system to orbit around christology

57 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 21 1

58 Kendall, *op cit*, p 210

59 J B Torrance sharply contrasts the Greek (filial and trinitarian) model for the relation between God and humans and the Western (legal and speculative) model "Perhaps we need therefore to interpret Calvin more in terms of his roots in the trinitarian, incarnational theology of the great Greek Fathers, Athanasius and the Cappadocian divines, and less in terms of the Latin Western Fathers--of Augustine and the Westminster divines," "The Concept of Federal Theology," in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, *op cit*, p 37 This fundamental presupposition is key in the discontinuity thesis and is beyond the scope of this work However, it is important for our purposes to notice from the evidence offered that the federal theologians in general and Goodwin in particular were unaware of any antithesis between the concept of *foedus* and trinitarian, incarnational theology Quite the contrary, it was seen as the most useful means of constructing such a system It is worth noting that Perkins first explains the two natures of Christ, emphasizing the importance of his incarnation and humanity, before asserting the covenant Far from seeing them as unrelated or even antithetical, Perkins saw the one leading naturally to the other (*Works*, ed by Ian Breward, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics, vol 3 [Appleford The Sutton Courenay Press, 1970), pp 197-213)

60 Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 78

61 Goodwin 4 113 For Calvin's trinitarian soteriological emphasis, see Alexandre Ganoczy, "Observations on Calvin's Trinitarian Doctrine of Grace," in *Probing The Reformed Tradition*, ed by Elsie Anne McKee and Brian Armstrong (Louisville Westminster/John Knox, 1989), pp 96-107

62 *ibid*

63 *ibid*, 7 3-11

64 *ibid*

65 *ibid*

66 *ibid*, 7 21

67 *ibid*, 7 240

68 *ibid*, 7 241

69 *ibid*, 7 243

70 *ibid*

71 One plank in the discontinuity thesis is that the only way in which one can confirm a trinitarian soteriological scheme that allows for direct faith in Christ is if one affirms a general atonement

Cf R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 210

72 Goodwin, 7 243

73 *ibid*

74 Cf J B Torrance, "Covenant or Contract," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 23, no 1, February, 1970, p 53 The reductionism of proponents of extreme discontinuity is illustrated in A C Clifford "The Protestant Reformers rejected the medieval scholastic theology in favour of a truly biblical one A number of scholarly studies indicate that beside Theodore Beza, Peter Martyr Vermigli (1500-62) and Girolamo Zanchi (1516-90) were responsible for reintroducing scholastic patterns of thought into Reformed theology Biblical theology thus assumed a significantly modified character by the late sixteenth-century It was expounded deductively rather than inductively, and theory took precedence over the textual data, an approach totally alien

to Luther and Calvin ” Terms such as “end, means, moving cause, etc ,” according to Clifford, “are derived not from the writers of the New Testament but from Aristotle,” “The Legacy of Aristotle,” chapter six, in *Atonement and Justification* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1990) Would Clifford suggest that the dogma of the Trinity is also unbiblical, since the term comes from Latin philosophical discussions in the third century? Such terms as “end, means, moving cause, etc ” are replete in Luther and Calvin and demonstrate again that a rejection of medieval scholastic theology on various subjects does not require abandonment of scholastic method Clifford’s criticisms reveal an antipathy toward systematic theology in general, since it requires the statement of propositions before offering exegetical support

75 R T Kendall, *op cit* , p 210-15

76 *ibid*

77 *ibid*

78 *ibid*

79 Perkins’s *Amilla Aurea* (1590) represents the first major work to advance the idea, but it was present seminally in John Bradford and was mediated through Beza Cf Joel Beeke, *op cit* , pp 72 ff

80 See Perkins’s *Works*, I, p 72

81 *ibid*

82 One of many examples that could be cited is found in the Smalcald Articles (1538), where Luther counters certain antinomian fanatics with the statement, “If sin does what it wishes, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present ” This is the essence of the practical syllogism Sin does not do whatever it wishes where faith and the Holy Spirit are present But sin does not do whatever it wishes in me Therefore, faith and the Holy Spirit are present Melanchthon adds, in the section of his *Loci Communes*, a statement that is directed against the antinomianism of Johannes Agricola (1494-1566), who fled Wittenberg under threat from Luther Melanchthon writes, “Grace and the gifts are bound together And by no means is one to think that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, bore God’s great wrath, and poured out his blood that men might continue in their raving madness and depravity Also it must be obvious that if conversion to God does not happen, and the heart continues in sin against conscience, that there is no true faith that desires or receives forgiveness of sins The Holy Spirit is not in a heart in which there is no fear of God, but instead a continuing defiance,” (trans and edited by Clyde Manschreck [Oxford Univ Press, 1965, reissued by Baker Book House in paper, 1982], p 182) Paul Althaus observes that although Luther would not admit the consideration of works into justification, the Christian “should take them into consideration as giving a ‘certain sign’ of true faith They can neither gain nor guarantee salvation, but as the fruits of faith they provide a posteriori certainty of it” (*The Theology of Martin Luther* [Philadelphia Fortress, 1966], p 248)

83 Dewey Wallace, *op cit* , p 31

84 Because Calvin made no distinction between the faith of recumbency and the faith of assurance, as the Puritans did, he was more suspicious than they of allowing the believer to look to his works for assurance (3 13 3-5 and 3 19 2) One may not seek assurance of election “outside the way,” by trying to penetrate God’s secret decree (and here the Puritans are in solid agreement, as we shall see) In his commentary on 2 Peter, Calvin argues that election cannot depend on good works any more than justification, but assurance can be improved or discouraged by one’s fruit, “so long as they place their sure foundation elsewhere,” namely, in Christ alone “Peter [in 2 Pet 1 10] is encouraging those who feel the effective working of the Spirit in themselves to be of good heart for the future, because the Lord has laid in them the sure foundation of a true and certain calling ” Taken with his strong warnings about building assurance of election on the weak foundation of

sanctification in the *Institutes* (especially 3.24.4), Calvin's emphasis is certainly different from the Puritans on this point. But that is due to his conviction that faith and assurance are identical. My point here is that Calvin does not in any of these remarks deny (a) the practical syllogism or (b) the legitimacy of being encouraged in one's assurance of election by such effects. He is even willing to say in the case of those who do not base their faith-assurance on its fruit, "But we do not forbid him from undergirding and strengthening this faith by signs of the divine benevolence toward him. For if, when all the gifts God has bestowed upon us are called to mind, they are like rays of the divine countenance by which we are illumined to contemplate that supreme light of goodness, much more is this true of the grace of good works, which shows that the Spirit of adoption has been given to us" (3.14.18). Therefore, while there may indeed be significant differences over the nature of assurance (which we shall consider in its place), the cleavage cannot be broadened to include this discussion.

85 *ibid*

86 William Ames, *op cit*, p. 302

87 R. T. Kendall, *op cit*, p. 33

88 The Westminster Confession, for instance, in Chapter 14, defines faith as merely "accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace," while assurance, in Chapter 18, is something for which the believer often struggles, amidst the assaults of doubt, sin and inconstancy. The Shorter Catechism declares in Question 36 that assurance flows from justification, rather than vice versa. As we shall see in our discussion of Goodwin under the "Object and Acts of Justifying Faith," strenuous efforts were made to clearly distinguish these two acts of faith precisely to exhibit the unconditional character of justifying grace.

89 *ibid*

90 *ibid*

91 Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p. 85

92 See footnote 84 above

93 Goodwin, preface to *Christ Set Forth*, *op cit*

94 *ibid*

95 Named after Peter Ramus (1515-72), French philosopher-logician, Ramism was an alternative to Aristotelianism. Each subject was divided and subdivided, reasoning from self-authenticating axioms to particulars deductively. For instance, the decree would be broken down into two parts (election and reprobation) and each of these would, in turn, be subdivided. The chart in Perkins's *Amilla Aurea* is illustrative of this method of categorizing all knowledge into specific parts. Distinct from Aristotelian syllogistic or rationalistic speculation, the method was calculated to produce practical knowledge. Cf. D. K. McKim, "Peter Ramus," in *The Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992).

96 Richard Muller, *op cit*, p. 112

97 In his commentary on Ephesians, especially in chapter one, Calvin offers such scholastic distinctions as "immediate aim," "highest end," etc. In fact, "The efficient cause [of election] is the good pleasure of the will of God, the material cause is Christ, and the final cause is the praise of His grace." He then proceeds to unfold the meaning of each of these categories and their exegetical justification. The entire discussion of election, redemption, calling, justification and sanctification in Ephesians one is framed by this Aristotelian, scholastic method. Further, in the *Institutes*, he uses the syllogism to overthrow Roman Catholic scholastics. "This one syllogism

gives us ample proof that none of the schools of the Sorbonne has even slightly tasted what justification of faith is" (3 18 8) It is the theology, not the method, that concerns Calvin

98 Calvin, *Institutes* 1 16 3 and 3 2 38

99 Even Luther, whose attitude toward Aristotle is well-known, employs the classical scholastic categories of necessity, efficiency, causality, etc , throughout his commentaries and polemical treatises, such as *De Servio Arbitrio* In his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1517), Luther directs his criticisms specifically toward Scotus and Biel who were scholastics but hardly Aristotelians In fact, he argues in a rather traditional fashion, as he was himself taught. For instance, "The best and infallible preparation for grace and the sole disposition toward grace is the eternal election and predestination of God " Luther does attack Aristotle's *Ethics*, for leading inevitably to a Pelagian interpretation, and he is critical of using syllogistic reasoning to climb into heaven Nevertheless, the real problem is most likely not Aristotle himself, but the improper interpretations "It is very doubtful whether the Latins comprehended the correct meaning of Aristotle "

100 In the *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, Luther adds, "Even the more useful definitions of Aristotle seem to beg the question," in the context of arguing against Biel's tortuous rationalization of merit When the definitions and distinctions obscure Scripture, they relinquish their usefulness, but this would be admitted by the Protestant scholastics as well

101 Goodwin, *Christ Set Forth*, *op cit* , p 3

102 Thomas Hooker, *The Poor Doubting Christian Drawn To Christ* (Grand Rapids Baker reprint, 1981) Cf Richard Sibbes, *Works*, vol V, p 391 "Reason not this, whether God hath elected or Christ hath died for thee This is the secret will of God But the commandment is to believe in Christ This binds " Had this been written by Luther or Calvin, proponents of the discontinuity thesis might well use this as an example of the cleavage between Calvin and the Calvinists, or its author (if a Puritan) would have to be regarded as an anomaly And yet, Sibbes does not regard such a remark as inconsistent with this suggestion elsewhere that assurance "is a reward of exact walking Faith is one thing, assurance another," volume VII, p 213 Proponents of discontinuity seem not to take into account the importance of this distinction between faith and assurance for the Puritans Therefore, such quotes as the above from Sibbes are taken as inconsistencies rather than as perfectly consistent descriptions of two distinct acts of faith

103 Joseph Alleine, *A Sure Guide To Heaven* (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1989), pp 34-37 It must be noted, however, that a distinction exists for the Puritans between *habitus* and *actus* Perfection in terms of *habitus* simply refers to the "new man" to whom Paul refers in Romans six But one wonders how one untrained in such scholastic subtleties could not be utterly confused by such remarks popularly expressed Even with the distinction, such a stress on the practical syllogism must have the effect of throwing even the stable into despair

104 *ibid*

105 Thomas Brooks, *Heaven On Earth A Treatise on Christian Assurance* (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1982 (from 1654 edition), p 102

106 *ibid*

107 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 14 18

108 Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith*, trans by James Clark (East Sussex Christian Focus, 1992), pp 40-41 Cf Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, *op cit* , pp 2-3

109 Beza, *ibid*

- 110 *Luther's Works*, American Edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press), vol. 23, p. 75
- 111 Goodwin, commentary on Ephesians 1:4-11, in volume 1 of the 1686 edition of his *Works*, *op cit*, pp. 2-30. Also Calvin: "Satan has no more grievous or dangerous temptation to dishearten believers than when he unsettles them with doubt about their election, while at the same time he arouses them with a wicked desire to seek it outside the way. I call it 'seeking outside the way' when mere man attempts to break into the inner recesses of divine wisdom, and tries to penetrate even to highest eternity, in order to find out what decision has been made concerning himself at God's judgment seat." Calvin's warning here could not be more severe: "For then he casts himself into the depths of a bottomless whirlpool to be swallowed up, he tangles himself in innumerable and inextricable snares, then he buries himself in an abyss of sightless darkness" (3:24:4).
- 112 William Perkins, *Works*, I:286-7
- 113 Tyndale, *Works*, I:77
- 114 William Bradford, *Works*, vol. II (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979), pp. 102, 113. In his letter, Bradford illustrates the ease with which reformers and Puritans alike could move between arguments for assurance of election based on the practical syllogism and the doctrine of God. In the case of the former, "Doubtless he hath chosen you, dear heart, he hath done in Christ, for in you I have seen his earnest, and before me and to me you could not deny it." And in the case of the latter: "Ah! my Joyce, think you God to be mutable? is he a changeling? doth he not love to the end them whom he loveth?" Any and every argument for gaining assurance was employed, although the practical syllogism increasingly gained prominence.
- 115 cited in Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p. 26
- 116 *ibid*, pp. 148-9
- 117 Goodwin, 8:88-9
- 118 *ibid*
- 119 *ibid*
- 120 *ibid*, 4:223
- 121 *ibid*, 4:208
- 122 Calvin, *Institutes* 3:21:1
- 123 Although Calamy repudiated the Arminian notion, he takes issue with the position at Dort, insisting that "Jesus Christ did not only die sufficiently for all, but God did intend, in giving Christ, and Christ in giving himself, did intend to put all men in a state of salvation in case they do believe." (recorded in A. F. Mitchell and J. Struthers, ed., *Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Assembly* [London, 1874], p. 152, and cited by A. C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990], p. 75)
- 124 Calvin, *Institutes* 3:14:18
- 125 Goodwin, *op cit*, 4:209-19
- 126 *ibid*, 4:223
- 127 However, this is only in the matter of seeking assurance, not of coming to faith in Christ. Goodwin is hardly alone in making that distinction, and emphasizing that faith is exercised with the universal offer held out. For instance, Thomas Shepard declared, "Whatever the secret purpose of Christ is, I regard not, in this Evangelical dispensation, he makes love to all." ("The Parable of Ten Virgins," 23)]
- 128 *A Body of Divinity, or The Summe and Substance of Christian Religion, Catechetically propounded, and explained, by way of Questions and Answers, etc.*, James Ussher, Bishop of

Armagh, 3rd ed (London M F . 1663) John Downname pulled this 3rd ed together 30 yrs after 1st ed “What tokens have we of our Election? A true faith and a godly life” (p 92)

129 Kendall, *op cit*, p 210

130 *ibid*, pp 16-17

131 Goodwin “ if any thinks the Father loves him ere he hath had faith in Christ and rested on him, it is a Turkish, Jewish faith” (8 371)

132 *ibid*, 7 254

133 *ibid*

134 *ibid*

135 *ibid*

136 *ibid*

137 At least a good part of the New England controversy between the elders and Cotton (with Anne Hutchinson defended by the latter) had to do with the question of nature and grace Cotton seemed to say that grace is unmediated and this had as much to do with the controversy as assurance Cf David Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638 A Documentary History*, second edition (Chapel Hill, N C Duke University Press)

138 Cf William K B Stoever, *‘A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven’ Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, Conn Wesleyan University Press, 1978) for the best account of the tensions between nature and grace, faith and assurance, and union with Christ among many of Goodwin’s New England colleagues

139 Cf Paul Cook, “Thomas Goodwin Mystic?,” *Diversity of Gifts* (Westminster Conference Reports, 1980) Dewey Wallace, depending on Peter Toon’s remark concerning Goodwin in *Hyper-Calvinism*, asserts of the Oxford divine, “Elements of his teaching smacked of Antinomianism” (p 148) Nevertheless, Goodwin’s insistence on means, the practical syllogism, and vehement criticism of eternal justification render such a judgment something of an overstatement, whatever his criticisms of legalism

140 Calvin’s *Institutes*, 1 7 4 We must beware, however, of confusing Calvin’s epistemology with his pneumatology, as this section falls under the knowledge of God the Creator, not God the Redeemer

141 Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 160

142 See for instance the following representative works John Eaton, *The Honey-combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone*(London R. Lancaster, 1642), John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory* (Bloomsbury E Huntington, 1811), *Holy Discoveries and Flames*(Bloomsbury E. Huntington, 1812)

143 Goodwin, 6 145

144 Many who reject the syllogism entirely because of the excesses of some who employed it fail to appreciate the simplicity of the syllogism itself There were many who actually found relief by using it

145 Perkins, *Works*, I 738, II 178

146 *ibid*

147 For instance, R T Kendall writes of Beza’s having won the day in the following manner “While Calvin’s doctrine of sanctification can be seen as thankfulness, Westminster theology lends itself to making sanctification the payment for the promise of salvation” (p 208) This points up Kendall’s confusion concerning the Puritan emphasis on justification as dependent on an absolute promise and assurance dependent on conditional promises When he reads these conditional statements, he immediately assumes that the doctrine of grace is compromised, when the issue is not, “How may I attain unto grace?”, but “How may I find some glimmer of certainty of my election from its fruit?” This may still lead to a legalistic and introspective search for assurance of the type Kendall, Armstrong, Bell, Clifford, et al , suspect, but not because the Westminster

divines somehow collapsed works into faith and denied *sola gratia*. Justifying faith is not assuring faith and the two depend on distinct criteria

148 Perkins, *Works*, I 72

149 David Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638 A Documentary History*, Second Edition (Chapel Hill, N C Duke University Press)

150 *ibid*

151 *ibid*

152 Goodwin, 6 416

153 *ibid*, 7 522

154 *ibid*, 7 530

155 Richard Muller, *op cit*, p 41

156 Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans by Harold Knight (Grand Rapids Baker, 1980)

157 Richard Muller, *op cit*, p 25

158 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 14 18 and 3 24 4

Chapter Three

“The Due Administration” of Divine Grace: Federalism and Conditionality

One of the most hotly debated sections of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* are chapters seven and eight “Of God’s Covenant with Man,” and “Of Christ the Mediator,” respectively. The Assembly begins its explication by marking the distance between creature and Creator. Quite apart from the question of sinfulness, the very finitude of creaturely existence requires condescension on the divine side if there is to be a meeting between the two parties. According to the divines, God entered into a *covenant of works* with Adam and his posterity, promising eternal life upon the condition of total and uninterrupted obedience. Adam having failed in this mediatorial role, a second Adam comes forward and fulfills the covenant of works for the elect and invites them to share in his trusteeship via a *covenant of grace*. The covenant of works, then, is fulfilled by Christ on behalf of the elect and the elect enter into this covenant with God now according to a different covenant that is conditioned by faith alone. All that was inherited from Adam is now transferred to Christ--eternal life, perfect righteousness, sanctification and redemption, now belongs to the believer. Although the covenant of grace is differently administered in the two testaments, it is one single covenant of pure promise, running from Genesis to Revelation.

Chapter eight, then, sets Christ forth as the Mediator of this covenant of grace and under this locus, the doctrines of the trinity, the incarnation, the atonement and predestination converge. Clearly, this is the most unifying theme in the entire system of the Assembly of Divines. One of

the Westminster divines, Thomas Watson, in his exegetical study of the Shorter Catechism, lists the various names Scripture gives to this covenant, explains how the two covenants differ, and answers the question, “But are not works required in the covenant of grace?”

Yes. But the covenant of grace does not require works in the same manner as the covenant of works did. In the first covenant, works were required as the condition of life, in the second, they are required only as the signs of life. In the first covenant, works were required as the grounds of salvation, in the new covenant, they are required as evidences of our love to God. In the first, they were required to the justification of our persons, in the new, to the manifestation of grace.¹

Again, the “old” and “new” covenants do not correspond to the Old and New Testaments, but to the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. “Jesus Christ,” writes Watson, “is the sum and quintessence of the gospel,”² and his discussion of christology follows from the requisites of soteriology, as was familiar to Continental Reformed scholasticism as well.³ Like the Westminster Confession and Catechisms themselves, Watson takes great pains to exegete the primary passages to prove the propositions and although the method may be scholastic, that does not in any way derogate from its thoroughly exegetical and christocentric distinctiveness.

Federalism: A New Invention?

Once more the debate over continuity enters the picture, as the Reformed scholastics are viewed as innovators. In the previous chapter we have discussed the suggestion that the Bezan doctrine of predestination (double and supralapsarian), which it is often alleged Calvin did not maintain, produced such widespread anxiety that something was required to soften the system. The notion of the covenant, with its synergistic operations, made the inscrutable, decreeing God a partner in a legal relationship.⁴ It is quite possible for one to speculate that the covenantal idea was brought in to soften the predestinarian scheme, but Richard Muller argues that the primary sources will not bear this wait with regard the Reformed scholastics on the Continent.⁵

In contrast to Muller's position, Holmes Rolston sharply distinguishes between the sixteenth century Reformed instruments, such as the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Second Helvetic Confession, and the later Puritan developments.⁶ Eventually, Law gained primacy in Reformed theology, requiring an excessively forensic arrangement that was well-supplied by the federal scheme. In short, "the order of the [Westminster] Confession--law, law broken, then grace--was substituted for Calvin's grace, grace lost in ingratitude, and grace restored."⁷ However, this underestimates the overwhelming legal framework of Calvin's soteriology, leaving one to wonder how Calvin's alleged "grace, grace lost, and grace restored" motif would differ substantially from the traditional Thomistic notion of grace perfecting nature. In working our way toward Goodwin's understanding of the covenant and his place in the discussion, we shall first briefly consider Calvin and his Continental successors on the covenantal theme, in the light of the discontinuity thesis.

James B. Torrance writes, "This distinction between a Covenant of Works and a Covenant of Grace was unknown to Calvin and the Reformers--nor indeed would Calvin ever have taught it," adducing as evidence Calvin's insistence that "'Old' and 'New' do not mean two covenants but two forms of the one eternal covenant."⁸ But this does not prove Torrance's point, since the federal theologians were just as eager to insist upon the unity of the covenant in both testaments, as we have already demonstrated from the text of the Confession itself.⁹ They never suggest that the two covenants are synonymous with "Old" and "New" testaments, but that they are two covenants running throughout both. If by "covenant" one means the idea that God has established a binding relationship, with Adam as the mediator of original sin and Christ as the mediator of

righteousness, “federalism” is virtually synonymous with the Augustinian tradition and hardly represents a modification of broadly catholic, much less Calvinian, soteriology. Augustine himself declared, “The first covenant was this, unto Adam ‘Whosoever thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death,’” and that is why all his children “are breakers of God’s covenant made with Adam in paradise”¹⁰. Here then, Augustine exhibits the two chief elements of the federal theology. A covenant made with Adam (which he even calls “the first covenant”), through which all of his posterity are regarded as covenant-breakers. Anselm’s famous *Cur Deus homo* is similarly based on a legal and economic reading of the debt humanity owes, the relationship between the two Adams, and the need for a theanthropic christology because of this soteric consideration.¹¹ Throughout the middle ages, the concept of *foedus* is much discussed and debated, with Gabriel Biel, for instance, making use of the idea, in spite of the fact that he was hardly considered a forerunner of the Reformation.¹²

Luther also shows his debt to the Pauline construction of “covenant” by observing,

This Mediator is Jesus Christ, which changeth not the voice of the law, nor hideth the same with a veil as Moses did, nor leadeth me out of the sight of the law, but he setteth himself against the wrath of the law and taketh it away, and satisfieth the law in his own body by himself. And by the Gospel he saith unto me, ‘Indeed the law threateneth unto thee the wrath of God and eternal death, but be not afraid, fly not away, but stand fast. I supply and perform all things for thee. I satisfy the law for thee.’

God “cannot revoke his law,” which he commanded the race from the beginning, so Christ stands in as the second Adam to fulfill the conditions of the Law and bear its curses for transgression.¹³ To be sure, this is not a full-blown federal theology, but the elements are present. In Adam, the entire race is regarded as a class of “law-breakers.” Do these remarks not clearly indicate a Law-

Gospel or Covenant of Works, Covenant of Grace, order? If that is so, by what law are they considered transgressors, unless there was a legal arrangement (which might be called a covenant) with Adam as the representative head of the race? If it is granted that Adam represented the human race and, by his sin, constituted his posterity sinners, and the Mediator performed all things and satisfied the law for all believers as a second Adam or representative, what distinguishes these acknowledgements from federalism besides the refinement and attention given to these features in organizing a system?

Similarly, Calvin writes,

The second requirement of our reconciliation with God was this that man, who by his disobedience had become lost, should by way of remedy counter it with obedience, satisfy God's judgment, and pay the penalties for sin. Accordingly, our Lord came forth as true man and took the person and the name of Adam in order to take Adam's place in obeying the Father, to present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to God's judgment, and, in the same flesh, to pay the penalty that we had deserved,

and Calvin considered absurd the suggestion that the notions of mercy and merit were opposed, so long as Christ is the one who merits

By his obedience, however, Christ truly acquired and *merited* grace for us with his Father. Many passages of Scripture surely and firmly attest this. I take it to be a commonplace that if Christ made satisfaction for our sins, if he paid the penalty owed by us, if he *appeased* God by *his obedience*--in short, if as a righteous man he suffered for unrighteous men--then he acquired salvation for us by his righteousness, which is tantamount to deserving it (emphasis added) ¹⁴

Calvin's exposition of Romans five carries the apostle's Adam-Christ motif to its reasonable conclusion. Adam and his posterity were commanded to obey, with the promise of eternal life attached to it. When Adam sinned, his posterity were reckoned transgressors of this command. But through the Mediator's law-keeping, the believer is restored to that perfect righteousness that he could never attain under a legal arrangement that his successors would simply label "the

covenant of works”¹⁵ “It follows from this that righteousness exists in Christ as a property, but that that which belongs properly to Christ is imputed to us” This is why the apostle writes, “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous” The obedience which we owe under the Law (i.e., the “covenant of works,” as it would be come to be identified) is rendered by the second Adam and imputed to the elect¹⁶ Calvin, like the other reformers, simply refers to this as “the Law,” and to the covenant of grace as “the Gospel,” but the elements are all here for later development¹⁷

As Paul Helm has pointed out, and as we have seen from the reformer’s own testimony, Calvin unabashedly speaks of Christ having merited his people’s salvation.¹⁸ In the *Institutes*, Calvin embraces the notion of Christ’s active obedience, which became such an important feature of federal theology “To this we can in general reply that he has achieved this for us by the whole course of his obedience Paul extends the oasis of the pardon that frees us from the curse of the law to the whole life of Christ Thus in his very baptism, also, he asserted that he fulfilled a part of righteousness in obediently carrying out his Father’s commandment In short, from the time when he took on the form of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us”¹⁹ Calvin speaks of the “covenant of the gospel, the sole foundation of which is Christ,” running through both testaments²⁰

But Calvin was not alone in this Helm points out that Tyndale’s translation of the Bible was essential, as the reformer saw the Bible as a covenant document²¹ Robert Rollock’s *Effectual Calling*, published in Latin in 1579 and translated in 1603, had enormous influence in shaping the federalism of the Westminster divines, and the idea was clearly articulated on the Continent among Calvin’s colleagues during and immediately following the Genevan reformer’s own career Helm concludes, therefore, “ the development of covenant theology was not a leisurely, academic

development of thought within Reformed theology, nor a speculative side-track, but an intense, practical, concentrated affair, the product of many factors occurring within a couple of generations. It was the outworking, in theological detail, of the basic Reformed principle—the glory of God in the salvation of sinners.”²²

Although he is generally comfortable with the discontinuity thesis, Tony Lane recognizes, “Calvin has no concept of a covenant of works before the Fall. But Calvin did hold that God’s dealings with man differ before and after the Fall, inside and outside of Christ, and this is at least a major part of what is meant by the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.”²³ This points up the importance of judging continuity on the basis of the particular elements necessary for federalism rather than on the basis of whether Calvin employed such terms or concepts in a systematic way that came to be identified with a particular hermeneutical emphasis. If one grants that Calvin held to a distinction between God’s relationship to humanity before and after the Fall, and if, as we have seen, that contrast is between a state of law-breaking and, through Christ’s meritorious obedience, a state of grace, is this not the substance of federalism? Therefore, to say that federalism of any kind is foreign to Scripture and the Christian tradition until the Assembly of Divines met at Westminster seems to reach beyond the evidence.

What is missing in these earlier writers, including Calvin, is the appeal to the covenant as a method of fleshing out and holding together the major tenets that the Genevan reformer most certainly espoused. Although Calvin himself did not use the concept as a means of schematizing the system, the process was taking place all around him long before the Westminster Assembly.²⁴

It is worth noting that some Westminster divines reject federalism who nevertheless maintain a firm adherence to particular redemption while others who affirm federalism nevertheless reject particular redemption (most notably, Edmund Calamy).²⁵ This presents a problem to the

discontinuity thesis expounded by Torrance, Kendall, Bell, Rolston, and Clifford ²⁶

Goodwin & Federal Theology

When we come to Goodwin, it becomes clear that he, too, is simply working out his covenant theology as a means of being faithful to a major biblical motif as well concerning the outworking of the trinitarian economy of redemption. In a discourse on *Man's Restauration By Grace*, Goodwin promises to show "the several parts which the Three Persons of the Godhead bear in the accomplishment of our Salvation"

Shewing that they have taken on them several works appropriated to them therein, and the distribution of our Salvation into three Parts according to the number of the three Persons, and the part which each of them have taken therein, viz The Father in Election, the Son in Redemption and Justification, the Holy Ghost in Sanctification and Application ²⁷

Again, just as with predestination, the goal of the covenant motif is christological. Christ "hath both in his person as God-man, and in execution of his Father's design in his work committed to him, 'all treasures of wisdom and knowledge' objectively for us to know him by, and subjectively in himself"²⁸ He put forward this trinitarian soteriological scheme already in his lively discourse, *Of the Knowledge of God the Father, &c* ²⁹ There is concurrence with each member of the trinity in every work, including redemption, "which yet is appropriated in a more especial manner unto Christ"³⁰ Goodwin adds,

And however it is in the works of the creation of the world, and of man, and of the angels in this respect, yet we may be sure that the clearest complete revelation and manifestation of these three persons, their distinction, order of personality, was by God himself reserved until the gospel should be preached, and that Christ his Son should appear, and be made manifest to the world, when it was that man's salvation came first upon the stage, to the end that man's salvation, and the works thereof, might have the most eminent and peculiar honour of this thing ³¹

The Covenant of Redempation

From the Greek *diatheke* to the Latin *foedus*, the “covenant” comes from the world of the legal courts. Closely related to a “pact,” the idea of covenant can be either one-sided or a partnership of sorts.³² We have already seen how Goodwin, like other Puritans, makes the theme of “Christ set forth” dominate his picture. His interest lies not in developing highly rationalistic, speculative, and metaphysical philosophical schemes, but in unfolding the trinitarian pattern of redemption, with Christ at the center of triune activity and self-revelation, an approach identical to that taken by Calvin.³³ Goodwin gives us a good example of the christological rather than philosophical rationale behind the development of this notion. It is not merely a doctrine, so that it could be placed at the center of the system, but is rather a method. In fact, it is often assumed, discussions of election, atonement, faith and repentance, union with Christ, simply presuppose the covenantal structure. It is a framework rather than a dogma, for the Puritans, as it provides what they are convinced is the biblical way of organizing the primary soteriological loci.

The so-called “Covenant of Redemption” is a treaty of partnership, to be sure, but it is made between the members of the Trinity. In this covenant, the Father, according to Goodwin, says,

I will choose him for life, but he will fall, and so fall short of what my love designed of him, but I will redeem him, says the Son, out of that lost estate. But yet being fallen he will refuse that grace, and the offers of it, and despise it, therefore I will sanctify him, said the Holy Ghost, and overcome his unrighteousness, and cause him to accept it.³⁴

In this covenant, then, Christ agrees to be the trustee for the elect, anticipating the Fall. This particular covenant, then, is not one in which human beings play any role. It is inter-trinitarian in both its construction and execution.

The Covenant of Works

It has been argued that Caspar Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus were the first to develop the notion of the two covenants with the addition of a covenant of redemption³⁵ Although the two-covenant motif is not explicit in the reformers, it is clear, as we have already seen, that they regarded Adam to have been the representative head for the human race and in that capacity had been given a command to obey, with blessedness resulting both for him and for his posterity It may be called a “covenant of works” or not, but the idea is certainly there in the reformers Bullinger and Calvin certainly did argue for the unity of the covenant of grace, centered in the covenant with Abraham and fulfilled in his Seed, as Luther argued in his Galatians commentary as well Therefore, the recognition of two ways to life, one by works and the other by grace, is linked to prelapsarian Adam in the case of the former and to Abraham and his Seed in the case of the latter This granted, only the taxonomy is left to the successors to develop

Some successors regarded the distinction between a covenant of works (or nature) and grace to be a bit unwarranted³⁶ But as for Goodwin, there is no question about the covenant of works, or nature, as it is also called

And as rightly as our divines do call the covenant we were by creation brought into *foedus naturae*, the covenant of nature, which is founded upon an equitable intercourse set up betwixt God the Creator and his intelligent unfallen creatures, by virtue of the law of his creating them, and as by their creation they came from his hands, God dealing with the creature singly and simply upon the terms thereof, and the creature being bound to deal with God according to that bond and obligation which God’s having created him in his image, with sufficient power to stand, and having raised him up thereunto out of pure nothing, lays upon him³⁷

Implied in the very arrangement of creation in Eden, this covenant does not lay any obligation upon Adam and the race that is beyond their natural powers, provided by God’s goodness in creation Because they were created upright and possessed “sufficient powers to stand,” God

expected nothing that was beyond Adam's ability to perform. The "covenant of nature," then, is simply the category for explaining the presentation in Genesis. God binds Adam to obey him, with the promise of eternal life (figured sacramentally in the tree of life) for continued righteousness and the promise of death (figured sacramentally in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) for defection.³⁸ The Puritans insist as well that when Adam failed to attain eternal life, he was a representative or "federal" figure. "Adam, as you all know," says Goodwin, "was reckoned as a common public person, not standing singly or alone for himself, but as representing all mankind to come of him."³⁹

Furthermore,

There was nothing at all supernatural in [the covenant of nature]. The righteousness whereby he was justified was no other than the natural righteousness in which he was created, and which was conserved and preserved by continuing to act holily, and by doing good according to the principles of holiness at first implanted in him. And so it was but such a justification as was a natural due to the creature so obeying, that God should pronounce him just upon it, for it was but God's giving him such approbation, that he both was, and did continue, 'good in his kind,' as he pronounced of all the other creatures in their kind, Gen. 1:31, when God saw that they were all good.⁴⁰

Of course, Adam did not continue to preserve this natural righteousness, although it was in his power. Nevertheless, Christ came in order to be the Second Adam, and he recovered that which Adam forfeited for the elect. "So as by the same law, what he did for us is reckoned or imputed to us, as if we ourselves had done it, and what was done to him, tending to our justification and salvation, is reckoned as done to us."⁴¹ Thus, Christ fulfills the covenant of works and merits the eternal life for the elect that Adam squandered. Both in his active and passive obedience, the

Second Adam earned the redemption of the elect and in this way God's justice is satisfied and the covenant is fulfilled

The Covenant of Grace

Strictly speaking, in this scheme reaffirmed and extrapolated by Goodwin, human beings are saved by works--that is, by the works of Christ in fulfilling the covenant of nature. The law is fulfilled rather than set aside. And yet, the benefits of that obedience are received by the believer apart from works, and apart from the conditions of that original covenant of nature. Therefore, what Christ earned under a covenant of works the elect receive under a covenant of grace.

Goodwin argues,

He became a Surety of the whole covenant, and every condition in it, take it in the largest sense, and this of all, both on God's part and on ours. For us he undertook to God to work all our works, and undergo all our punishments, to pay our debts for us, and to work in us all that God required should be done by us, in the covenant of grace. So then, all laid upon Christ and he was to look to it, or else his soul was to have gone for it. This is not the manner of other creditors: they use to charge the debt on both the surety and the debtor, but in this covenant (of grace, namely) Christ's single bond is entered, he alone is 'The Covenant,' so as God will have nought to say to us, till Christ fails him. He hath engaged himself first to require satisfactions at Christ's hands, who is our Surety.⁴²

Goodwin also demonstrates the growing emphasis on the historical line of redemption among covenant theologians. The covenant of grace far surpasses the glory of the covenant of works and, at every point, Goodwin contrasts the excellence of the first Adam and world, the Jewish priesthood and temple, with Christ and the new world he inaugurated.⁴³ Far from rationalistic speculation or a description of *Deus nudus absconditus*, Goodwin describes the relationship of God and fallen human beings in terms of the historical union of God and man in the person and work of the Mediator. In another place he writes in a way reminiscent of Anselm,

First, God laid this for a conclusion, that he would not put up with the least wrong from his creature, but he would have full satisfaction from the sinner. In the second place, it was clear and

as apparent, that no creature could satisfy him, neither the sinner nor any for him. And yet, thirdly, God stood upon this too, he would have satisfaction from a creature, and that nature that had sinned should satisfy.”⁴⁴

God became man to fulfill the covenant of works and this for the purpose of handing over to fallen, covenant-breaking human beings, a covenant of grace. The softening of predestination is no more the motivation for the development of this federal hermeneutical structure than Luther’s *Bondage of the Will* required a softening of his necessitarian doctrine by the Law-Gospel hermeneutic.

In some ways, one can see how the federal covenant of works and covenant of grace schemes parallel the Lutheran Law-Gospel antithesis, and this is especially important in our understanding of Goodwin’s notion of assurance. If the Law speaks terror to the conscience in the matter of justification, how can it ever provide assurance?⁴⁵ Goodwin agrees with this and the federal theology prohibits building either faith *or* assurance on its equivalent of the category of “Law,” viz., the Covenant of Works.⁴⁶ This will become particularly observable when we discuss assurance in relation to justification and sanctification. One wonders if Toon recognized that his criticism of Puritanism was, in effect, a criticism of the Lutheran tradition when he wrote, “The influence of this Covenant Theology was to develop the idea in some quarters that everything in the Bible is either law or gospel, which in turn made doctrine arid.”⁴⁷ It was Luther, not the Westminster Assembly, who championed this ostensibly arid approach. Thus, the Puritans are criticized for creating a new system totally unknown to the reformers, in what became an invitation to legalism, with no hope of assurance, while that “innovation” is, after all, the most fundamental hermeneutical

article of the magisterial Reformation. According to the Puritan understanding of the covenant of grace, those who now seek to be accepted by God by their own sacrifices, obedience, observances, graces, or zeal, are, ironically, covenant-breakers in their very attempt to be covenant-keepers. By relying on their own ability to fulfill the covenant of works or nature they take themselves out from under the federal headship of Christ, under which the elect are seen as righteous because of Christ's covenant-keeping, and must be judged (and hence, condemned) under the covenant of works.

Within the covenant of grace itself, however, there are two very discernable administrations, according to Chapter VII, Sections 5-6, of the Westminster Confession: the Old and New Covenants. These are not in addition to the covenants described above: the covenant of redemption is eternal, the covenants of works and grace run coextensively and coterminously from Genesis to Revelation, but within that covenant of grace, announced in Genesis chapter three, fulfilled in the mission of Christ and in its application by the Holy Spirit, there are two historical periods. In the Old Testament or "Covenant," following Calvin and the rest of the Reformed tradition, Goodwin sees types and shadows, it is in the category of "promise," whereas the New Covenant is in the category of "fulfillment." The New Covenant is superior, says Goodwin, for three principal reasons: (1) Here divine mercy is demonstrated in a way that is superior to the older arrangement of types and shadows, (2) the trinitarian purpose and activity is unfolded, (3) Christ is revealed. We did not see Christ in nature (i.e., the covenant of works), nor in the *imago Dei*, nor indeed even according to his person, but only according to his work, and most particularly in the Gospel. The Gospel is revealed in the Old Testament, but under the

concealment of representative ceremonies and offices, in the New, it is announced, fulfilled, and finally consummated⁴⁸

Again, the historical rather than philosophical language is primary, although the two are not seen as antithetical

And however it is in the works of the creation of the world, and of man, and of the angels in this respect, yet we may be sure that the clearest complete revelation and manifestation of these three persons, their distinction, order of personality, was by God himself reserved until the gospel should be preached, and that Christ his Son should appear, and be made manifest to the world, when it was that man's salvation came first upon the stage, to the end that man's salvation, and the works thereof, might have the most eminent and peculiar honour of this thing⁴⁹

So once again, the discussion of the covenant is not introduced as a mitigating influence to rigorous predestinarianism, nor as a speculative interest. But Goodwin is simply operating within the traditional Reformed and Puritan framework of "Christ the Mediator." The Westminster divines, for instance, set forth the covenant when the discussion of the ruin of the human race leads them to ask, "Must everyone be damned? Is there any way of salvation?"⁵⁰ It is not even discussed under the doctrine of God, nor is it considered as a way into the secret council of God. The federal scheme is brought in for the purpose of ordering the system's soteriological emphases.

Finally, the administration of this covenant of grace is an act of divine condescension, and Goodwin particularly uses this to explain the transcendent-immanent polarity of the Creator-creature relationship.

Now, in the work of creation in its kind, as in other works of their kind, God regulates himself by the measure of a due-ness and becomingness between him and the creature. And although there could be no obligation, simply considered, in him 'that works all according to the counsel of his will' freely, yet his will regulated itself by what the same counsel judged most becoming to do, as that which his counsel judged so to be⁵¹

Therefore, Goodwin follows precisely Calvin's revision of Anselm's "federalistic"

interpretation in *Cur Deus homo* God was not obligated to save, nor was he obligated to save in the manner in which he did, but in his wisdom and freedom, he determined to save the elect in this manner “And it was yet a greater condescension to ordain his eternal Son to dwell in human nature, and that nature to become one person with him, which was the fundamental decree of all, for we are chosen in Christ as our head, Eph 1 3 ”⁵²

The covenant of grace becomes, then, the form in which the Gospel is presented and received, both in the first act of faith (recumbency) and in the reflex act of assurance Thus, Ian Breward is incorrect when he writes of federal theology, “One could only speak of God’s mercy when one was assured of participation in the covenant of grace ”⁵³ It was precisely to make sure that even the weakest believers *could* speak of God’s mercy and place their faith in it *in spite of their lack of assurance*, that they distinguished between the faith that participates and the faith that knows it is participating The Puritans, from Perkins to Goodwin, rejected that very idea into which they thought Reformed theology could fall and insisted that one could not only “speak of God’s mercy,” but trust in God’s mercy whether or not one was “assured of participation in the covenant of grace ”⁵⁴

The Covenant and the Cross

It is the rigor of the covenantal framework, not of predestination, that leads the Reformed (including the Puritans) to develop a clearer doctrine of the atonement in terms of its particular scope Its necessity is required, they believed, not simply by inference from election as a logical deduction, but by the trinitarian unity in redemption underscored by the covenantal scheme The Westminster Confession explains the scope of redemption under the discussion of the covenant, not

under the doctrine of God, providence, or predestination,⁵⁵ and since part of the scope of this thesis is to demonstrate continuity between Calvin and the English Calvinists, with special attention to Thomas Goodwin, it is necessary to establish the link between Calvin and his successors among the English Puritans on this very point. Here we must interact directly with the objections of the discontinuity thesis pertaining to federalism, especially as it relates so closely to the question of assurance. R. T. Kendall argues that limited atonement is chief among the innovations to Calvin's thought that combined to produce the anxiety which inevitably produced experimental predestinarianism.⁵⁶ This is questionable for the following reasons:

1. Logically. If one believes in reprobation at all (as Luther and Calvin did), even if one embraced a universal atonement, there is still the question, "Am I chosen?" Kendall argues that Calvin did not trouble himself with the practical syllogism because, although he embraced reprobation, he accepted universal atonement. But if God has elected some and reprobated the rest, as Calvin clearly argues,⁵⁷ a universal atonement is of no use in comforting someone who might easily be someone for whom Christ died, and yet be someone he has decided to reprobate. Either way, there must be a reflex act. The only question is, "What is the object of that reflexive act?" Calvin argued that it was the unconditional promise⁵⁸ and Goodwin embraced the traditional Puritan view that it was a combination of the *sylogismus practicus* and the *sylogismus mysticus*.⁵⁹

2. Historically

a. We have already noted Calamy's objection to Dordt's interpretation.⁶⁰ At Westminster, Robert Baillie complained, such notable divines as John Goodwin, William Twisse, Edmund

Calamy, John Arrowsmith, Richard Vines, and Lazarus Seaman, and many other English Calvinists of the "experimental predestinarian" tradition either were silent on the matter of limited atonement or voiced opposition to the position, the latter being the case with Calamy, as we have already seen⁶¹ Referring to those followers of the French theologian Moises Amyraut who denied limited atonement, Robert Baillie, at Westminster, complained, "Many more love their fancies here than I did expect"⁶² Richard Baxter was as introspective and experimental as the most rigid Puritan, and he was certainly not Bezan In fact, Baxter argued that Owens's "exact payment" scheme of limited atonement was at the root of antinomianism⁶³ Regardless of whether Baxter was correct, it presents a serious problem for Kendall's notion that the motivation of Puritan experimentalism was due to the doctrines of reprobation and limited atonement Here, by the way, Kendall's thesis, like that of Brian Armstrong, does not appear to be new, but rather a revival of Amyraut's account⁶⁴

b A foundational question in Kendall's thesis regards his suggestion that Calvin did not adhere to limited atonement In fact, it is more than that "Fundamental to the doctrine of faith in John Calvin is his belief that Christ died indiscriminately for all men"⁶⁵ Two things must be noted here First, it is anachronistic to read a seventeenth century debate into the mid-sixteenth century Thus, J I Packer's claim that, "the Synod of Dort said nothing Calvin would not have said if confronted with the same debate,"⁶⁶ is also difficult to defend, since he was not confronted with the same debate Calvin must be made to argue in a way which is strained and uncharacteristic of his focus

The question ought not to be, Would Calvin have accepted the conclusions of Dort and the

Puritans as represented by Goodwin?, but rather, What would likely have been Calvin's view in the mid-sixteenth century? After all, the medieval school to which both Luther and Calvin were closest was the Augustinian and that school, particularly in its most conservative strains, had throughout the middle ages affirmed the "sufficiency-efficiency" distinction⁶⁷ Thus, instead of asking how closely Calvin's view corresponds to Dordt, we ought to first settle where Calvin stood in his own tradition and then, secondarily, determine the similarities and differences between that tradition and Dordt

In the first stage, then, one could argue that Calvin was, like Luther,⁶⁸ an Augustinian who affirmed the sufficiency-efficiency doctrine of the atonement Thus, it was perfectly natural for him to affirm the universal provision and invitation which one finds peppered throughout his commentaries Yet, he makes enough qualifications in connection with these sweeping declarations that, especially when taken with his system as a whole, one could hardly suggest that Calvin ascribed more to sufficiency than was generally recognized in the schools At any rate, the burden of proof tends toward those who would try to place Calvin outside this tradition, a tradition which was the most hospitable of all scholastic traditions to the theology of the Reformation Especially in view of Luther's rigorous defense of predestination and the convictions of Bradwardine⁶⁹ and Staupitz⁷⁰, we would expect a clear denial of the sufficiency-efficiency distinction before we accepted this contention of Kendall's thesis

Next, in terms of comparing this traditional view to Dordt, a number of observations need to be made First, it will take more than references to a universal provision in Calvin's commentaries to put him at odds with Dordt and Puritans like Goodwin After all, there is nothing in either the

efficiency-sufficiency view or the Dordt position which requires a limited Gospel appeal. When Dordt affirms that, "This death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world," it is clearly in the sufficiency-efficiency tradition of the middle ages.⁷¹ Nevertheless, it is just such statements that are taken by Kendall as proof not of Calvin's continuity with the sufficiency-efficiency tradition that Dordt also affirmed, but of Calvin's belief in universal redemption. The divines at Dordt and the Puritans who accepted their conclusions enthusiastically affirmed the universal sufficiency of the atonement, so it will take more than statements from Calvin along these lines to demonstrate his belief in either universal efficiency (universalism) or hypothetical universalism (Amyraut).⁷²

"Moreover," Dordt continues, "it is the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life" (Art. 5). So much for making it impossible for believers to look directly to Christ for assurance. It is only when distinguishing the efficiency of Christ's death from its sufficiency that Dordt limits the scope. More significantly, Kendall not only treats Calvin's views anachronistically, he actually asserts that Calvin does not accept the sufficiency-efficiency distinction.⁷³ Nevertheless, in commenting on 1 John 2:2, Calvin clearly affirms his place in that tradition, employing that very distinction in his exegesis, concluding that "the world" refers to "all who believe."⁷⁴ While it is not the main point of the passage, Calvin nevertheless states, "I pass by the dotages of the fanatics, who under this pretence extend salvation to all the reprobate, and therefore to Satan himself. Such a monstrous thing deserves no refutation. They who seek to avoid this absurdity, have said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole

world, but efficiently only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools," and Calvin is convinced "that what has been said is true," but argues that it does not go far enough, "for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole Church."⁷⁵ The same emphasis may be seen in his commentary on Romans 5:18.⁷⁶ Calvin himself settles the matter by saying that he is convinced that "Christ suffered sufficiently for all, but efficaciously only for the elect."⁷⁷

When we come upon general references to "the world" or "all men," "The universal term 'all' must always be referred to all classes of men, and not to persons," Calvin argues.⁷⁸ Neither the Amyraldian nor the Arminian accepts that medieval solution. In that case, Dordt is heir to Calvin's legacy, and the Reformed orthodox, including the Puritans, stand in continuity with Calvin. To be sure, it is not an emphasis for Calvin, but then it is not an emphasis for Goodwin or the other Westminster divines, either. It is clearly stated and defined as a necessary aspect of the federal structure, but it is not prominent in the Puritan pulpit and press, rather, it is assumed as part of the general covenantal scheme.⁷⁹

Kendall simply fills in too many blanks in Calvin with his own logical deductions and conclusions rather than the reformer's. For instance, Kendall quotes Calvin's warning to "fix our eyes on the death of Christ" and concludes, "Had Christ died only for those whom God had chosen by His secret decree, then it would obviously cease to be a pledge to all."⁸⁰ That is one plausible deduction of Kendall's logic, but not necessarily Calvin's. Nor does it appear to be a deduction assumed by Goodwin, since the whole emphasis of his theology, practice, and preaching is on "Christ set forth." The same is true when we recall the counsel of the Belgic Confession,

officially adopted at Dordt, that we look nowhere else but to Christ,⁸¹ and Dordt's determination to offer all persons "the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life"⁸² Kendall might deduce from this an internal contradiction within the tradition, but the fact is that Dordt affirms everything Calvin taught and denied nothing of his essential interpretations of biblical and systematic theology

Even on the extent of the atonement, therefore, we find continuity between Calvin and the Puritans and just as the lack of a focus on a federal scheme does not keep Calvin from holding the essential features, so his failure to comprehensively and systematically treat the extent of the atonement does not keep him from agreement with the sufficiency-efficiency interpretation. The extent of the atonement becomes more important as the system is fleshed out and its implications become clearer, but the ideas are seminal in Calvin. Robert Letham also demonstrates the continuity here among the Reformed on the Continent in the sixteenth century.⁸³

It is difficult to see how J. B. Torrance can conclude that limited atonement or particular redemption, as held by the Westminster divines, is based on the abandonment of Calvin's notion of Christ's "solidarity with all men as the Head of the race," since "solidarity" is precisely what is implied in federal theology. One cannot help but see Torrance's criticisms of federalism as a case of special pleading for Irenaeus rather than Calvin.

The emphasis of doctrine is no longer on the Incarnation, on Christ's solidarity with all men, but almost exclusively on His Work on behalf of the elect, His passive obedience on the Cross for the sins of believers, with whom He stands related, not in terms of incarnational oneness, but of *foedus*, of contract. The result was a loss of the older emphasis on 'Union with Christ our Head' which is replaced by a more judicial interpretation of faith.⁸⁴

First, Calvin, as we have seen, does see the representative character of his mediatorial mission

in legal terms, going so far as to argue what will become a chief feature of federalism, the belief that Christ actually *merited* the salvation of believers, devoting an entire chapter of *The Institutes* to this proposition⁸⁵

Second, it is just such an emphasis on “union with Christ,” which Torrance says distinguishes Calvin from his successors, that energizes federalism, viewing Christ as the Second Adam in whom the believer finds everything necessary for imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. The believer’s mystical union with Christ is part of a corporate union of Christ’s body, the church (not the world), and this Puritan understanding is consistent with Calvin’s. It is simply impossible to, on the one hand, make Calvin say that this union extends to the reprobate, and, on the other, to suggest that the “union with Christ” motif was minor among the reformer’s successors. Tudur Jones sees in Puritanism in general and in Goodwin in particular a systematic recovery and emphasis of this important historical-theological motif. How could “Christ the Mediator,” so central as we have seen, be regarded as anything but synonymous with the *unio Christi* motif?⁸⁶

The Covenant and Conditionality

If there is a wide consensus on the general structure of the covenant and its execution, with Christ as the Mediator of the elect, the interpretations vary among the Puritans with regard to the nature of the covenant of grace in terms of its bi-polar character⁸⁷. Thus, many scholars have attempted to reduce Puritanism into one camp or the other with regard to the question of whether the covenant of grace is absolute or conditional. As we shall argue, it is a matter of some widespread disagreement--not only later in the Puritan tradition, but throughout its development

A brief historical survey of viewpoints on this matter is required in order to understand

Goodwin's position

A Tyndale

One cannot help but notice in William Tyndale a moralistic streak running throughout his work. Justification is defined with some precision, but it is clearly the believer's renewal, conversion, regeneration, and sanctification that interests the English reformer most. Therefore, one finds in Tyndale's discussions of the covenant a heavy stress on the conditional aspect of the covenant. As Kendall points out, Tyndale declared that, "All the good promises which are made us throughout all the scriptures are all made us on this condition and covenant on our part, that we hence forth love the law of God, to walk therein, and to do it, and fashion our lives thereafter there is [sic] no promises made him, but to them only that promise to keep the law." "None of us can be received to grace but upon a condition to keep the law," Tyndale stated. Grace will not "continue any longer than the purpose to keep the Law lasteth" ⁸⁸

These promises, purposes and intentions to bind oneself to God the Puritans called "conditions" of the covenant, although they are conditions which God himself makes sure the elect will meet, by grace alone. This is key for us to recognize before our discussing Goodwin's view. It is just this sort of conditionality, stressing the human side of the bi-polar covenant, that Goodwin feared had been corrupting the direct focus on Christ ⁸⁹. We often think of conditions as *a priori* "Do this and you shall live," but the Puritans had repentance and faith as the sole necessary *a priori* conditions, although they added other *a posteriori* conditions. Perseverance, for instance, may be considered a condition of salvation--not as an antecedent, but as a consequent condition. If one does not persevere to the end, can he or she expect the welcome attached to the divine promise?

In this sense, then, perseverance would be one such *a posteriori* condition of final salvation, but not of justification.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, when we come to Tyndale's view that when we break the Law, "we must sue for a new pardon, and have a new fight against sin, hell, and desperation, ere we can come to a quiet faith again,"⁹¹ it becomes increasingly difficult to see how this accent on conditionality does not entirely erode the unconditional aspect of the covenant of grace, founded as it is upon the perfect righteousness (active and passive), imputed to the believer. Here the unconditionality of the covenant (or, as Calvin more frequently refers to it, "the promise")⁹² is subordinated to its conditionality, and this is an emphasis that one does find more in the theology of Zurich than that of Geneva or Strasbourg.⁹³ Expressions such as these have made scholars such as Trinterud conclude that the moralistic impulse in Puritanism springs from Tyndale's covenant theology, influenced by Zurich and the Rhineland.⁹⁴ While it is unsafe to attempt to trace such a heavy emphasis on conditionality in Bullinger and in the Reformed scholastics on the Continent, it is certainly apparent in Tyndale. But we should see this, not so much in terms of a faulty trail of influences, but in terms of an inherent tension within covenant theology itself. The covenant of grace is synonymous with union with Christ. In both motifs, there are two mediators, Adam and Christ, both impute and impart to their members the fruit of their headship, and in both there is an objective and a subjective element.⁹⁵ For instance, to emphasize union with Christ is to include justification and sanctification, imputation and actual renewal, as effects of this faith-union.⁹⁶ This is why the union with Christ motif is so prominent among the Puritans, contrary to Torrance's conclusion above. It is a corollary to the covenantal metaphor and just as one can say that a failure to repent and grow in holiness is a sure sign of not belonging to the Vine that nourishes all of the branches that are in union with it, so a failure to produce fruit is evidence that

the covenant's conditions have not been met. Genuine faith, through which the believer receives the benefits of the covenant of grace, produces the very effects which the Puritans call "conditions."⁹⁷ It is not that the conditions themselves save or justify, but that they are always present in those who are saved and justified.⁹⁸ They are therefore necessary as effects, not as causes.

D Perkins to Goodwin

In proving *sola fide* against Rome, Perkins appeals to the covenant and its absolute and conditional implications.

In the covenant of grace two things must be considered: the substance thereof and the condition. The substance of the covenant is that righteousness and life everlasting is given to God's church and people by Christ. The condition is that we for our parts are by faith to receive the foresaid benefits and this condition is by grace as well as the substance. And for the giving of Christ God hath appointed special ordinances, as the preaching of the word and the administration of the Sacraments.⁹⁹

First, notice that the substance of the covenant is not the believer's righteousness, but Christ's, second, that Perkins does not see union with Christ in purely individualistic terms, but affirms the corporate character of his headship over "God's church and people of Christ." This, contrary to Jinkins' contention of federalism leading to individualism,¹⁰⁰ So Perkins distinguishes the unconditional aspect from the conditional aspect in terms of substance and condition. Faith is that condition and even this is by grace, Perkins says. But further, faith comes through means, as Paul said in Romans ten. Therefore, the Word and Sacraments do not become conditions of justification, but do become ordinary means or conditions of faith.

William Ames, trained by Perkins, mediated his mentor's thought to later Puritans and Ames prefers to call the covenant of grace a "testament" to avoid contractual overtones. "Yet because it is a free gift and confirmed by the death of the giver, it is more properly called a testament, not a covenant, Heb 9 16." ¹⁰¹ The covenant of grace differs from that of works in that, "in the former there was an agreement of two parties, God and man, but in the new only God covenants. For man being dead in sin has no ability to make a spiritual covenant with God. But if two parties are necessary in the strict sense of a covenant, then God is a party assuming and constituting and man is a party assumed." ¹⁰² This does not appear to demonstrate an emphasis on covenantal conditionality.

This question of means becomes almost central for the "spiritual brotherhood." Including William Perkins, Paul Baynes, John Preston, John Cotton, Richard Sibbes, and Thomas Shepard, this line of Puritan pastors and divines measures both the flexibility and consistency of covenant theology. There is always an inherent tension between conditionality and the absolute character of the covenant, but activity and obligation were never confused with merit. Nevertheless, in any system with such a tension, it is easy to emphasize one side to the exclusion of the other, and the test of the Puritan balance came in New England, during the Antinomian Controversy, to which we have referred.

In New England, it became clear that the principal tension lay not in the dialectic of faith and works-righteousness, but of nature and grace. Since John Cotton, at the heart of the controversy, regarded Goodwin as a major influence, ¹⁰³ this is particularly integral to Goodwin's view of the covenant and its relation to assurance. Furthermore, in his criticisms of preparationism, Goodwin especially refers to Peter Bulkely, one of the New England elders, and seems to side with Cotton on this point. ¹⁰⁴ And yet, Goodwin clearly insists upon means, eschewing the overt enthusiasm

with which the elders charged Cotton. When Governor Winthrop reported what he considered the main points in the debate, what came out was a bit surprising even to the elders who suspected Cotton and Anne Hutchinson of enthusiastic leanings.¹⁰⁵ Included were the beliefs in the physical indwelling of the Holy Spirit, justification before faith, the notion that “the letter of the scripture holds forth nothing but a covenant of works, and that the covenant of grace was the spirit of the scripture, which was known only to believers.”¹⁰⁶ Finally, “the ground of it all was found to be assurance by immediate revelation.”¹⁰⁷ Winthrop reported that this was the position of all or most of the Boston churches.¹⁰⁸

Perhaps Winthrop overstated or misstated the position of the Bostonians, but that is not important for our purposes here, what concerns us is that the New England elders and the governor, himself well-trained in such debates, saw it as a nature-grace problem. This is why “antinomianism” becomes such an elusive term to describe the seventeenth century movements that go by that name. After all, it was much more than the notion that the Law is no longer important in the life of the believer, it was fundamentally a debate in which the reformers had participated with the “fantastical Anabaptists” or “enthusiasts.”¹⁰⁹ The Puritans also recognized these groups in their polemics, and added a certain sect, “The Family of Love” (otherwise known as “Familists”) to the list, due to its rather great popularity.¹¹⁰

As Stoeber points out so thoroughly, the elders--accused of so emphasizing the conditionality of the covenant that they returned to “the covenant of works”--were usually doing nothing more than upholding a traditional Protestant insistence on means.¹¹¹ This is why the Westminster Assembly insisted on stating the distinction between “absolute necessity” and “secondary causes,” because God does not do everything directly, but often mediates his activity and fulfills his

decree through the instrumentality of natural means. The opposite of means was not unconditional grace in the minds of the elders, but fatalistic enthusiasm, the subversion of nature by grace. This is why they insisted on the employment of reason, common sense, experience, and human activity (especially making use of Word and sacrament) toward the obtaining of assurance and comfort without these being at odds with grace. It is through these natural means that God's decree is realized.

Therefore, it is somewhat reductionistic to view the Antinomian Controversy as the inevitable result of the inherent legalism of the federal system, in which Cotton and his supporters end up becoming the champions who recover Calvin's emphasis. Both Cotton and the elders argued from within the covenantal framework and, in fact, highlighted various features of the system in order to refute their opponent. For Cotton and Hutchinson, the dialectic between the covenant of grace and works provided a basis for what really ended up more of a dialectic between grace and nature, and for the elders, the conditionality of the covenant of grace was stressed because of its relevance for the debate. It was not as if Cotton was defending imputation over infusion in the matter of justification, the real problem was that he allowed no means for the attainment of faith, made justification prior to faith, denied sanctification as a sign of justification, and insisted that sanctification as well as justification is imputed.¹¹²

In the debate, Shepard defended the traditional Puritan distinction between conditional and absolute promises in the covenant. What Cotton and his followers were hearing in much of the preaching in New England must have confused these two, for Cotton was certainly not unaware of the subtle federal distinctions, the Boston pastor had been one of the most influential Puritan fathers in England. Nevertheless, Shepard reasserts the traditional Puritan notion by arguing that the absolute promise may be sought via ordinary means and assurance may be sought via

conditional promises. One need only see one condition met in his or her experience (love for God and his people, enjoyment of the Word and sacraments, hatred of sin itself and not just its effects) in order to “conclude that the conditional promise belongs to him, and if one promise, then all God’s promises, and therefore that absolute promises are his own, because at least one conditional promise is”¹¹³ This is simply a refined explanation of Perkins’s “golden chaine”

By failing to properly distinguish not only between the faith of recumbency and the faith of assurance, but also between the absolute and conditional, many in New England seem to have been under the impression that the very ground of the covenant and the means of being united to Christ, its Mediator, was the meeting of certain criteria other than the exercise of saving faith. But this failure to properly distinguish the Puritan and federal concepts is not only found in seventeenth-century New England. It is also replete in the arguments for discontinuity, where it is assumed that “conditional” promises require a *quid pro quo* arrangement between God and humans who meet the conditions.¹¹⁴ For most Puritans, the covenant was not absolute and conditional in the same sense. It was absolute in the sense of the promise of free justification, apart from any works, as to the ground of the believer’s righteousness and union with Christ, and it was conditional in the sense of antecedent conditions (faith and repentance) and consequent conditions (perseverance and sanctification).¹¹⁵ It is clear to John Owen that the covenant is absolute *and* conditional, but this is not a contradiction in terms for a divine who was hardly a legalist and, in fact, was, as we have observed, even accused of having antinomian sympathies. First, as to its absolute character

There is provision made in [the covenant of grace] *against all and every sin that would disannul the covenant*, and make a final separation between God and a soul that hath been once taken into the bond thereof. This provision is *absolute*. God hath taken upon himself the making of this good, and the establishing this law of the covenant, that it shall not by any sin be disannulled. Jer xxxii 40, ‘I will,’ saith God, ‘make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.’ The security hereof depends not on any thing in ourselves. All that is in us is to be used as a

means of the accomplishment of this promise, but the event or issue depends absolutely on the faithfulness of God. And the whole certainty and stability of the covenant depends on the efficacy of the grace administered in it to preserve men from all such sins as would disannul it (emphasis in original) 115

“Grace reigneth” in this covenant according to God’s absolute promise

But this provision in the covenant of grace against peace-ruining, soul-perplexing sins, is not, as to the administration of it, absolute. There are covenant commands and exhortations, on the attendance whereunto the administration of much covenant grace doth depend. To watch, pray, improve faith, to stand on our guard continually, to mortify sin, to fight against temptations, with steadfastness, diligence, constancy, are everywhere prescribed unto us, and that in order unto the insurance of the grace mentioned. These things are on our part the condition of the administration of that abundant grace which is to preserve us from soul-entangling sins 116

Goodwin’s Place in the Absolute-Conditional Discussion

As we saw in the historical overview of the period, Goodwin, Owen, and the high Calvinists who were shaped by their work, were concerned that the conditional aspect had become too much emphasized, to the detriment of its unconditionality. Goodwin is even reluctant to call faith a condition, due to that which he considers abuses 117. The covenant rests not on commands (Law), but on promises (Gospel). “Now the covenant of grace is but the pure resolutions of grace in the heart of God, put into written promises.” First, “There are absolute promises, made to no conditions.” Second, “There are inviting promises, as that before mentioned, ‘Come to me, you that are weary.’” Third, “There are assuring promises, as those made to such and such qualifications of sanctification, &c.” This is precisely what the older Puritans meant by their references to conditionality. “But still what is it that is promised in them, which the heart should only eye? It is Christ, in whom the soul rests and hath comfort in, and not in its grace” 118

This was precisely Calvin’s point concerning the use of evidences in assurance, “that the saints,

when it is a question of the founding and establishing of their own salvation, without regard for works turn their eyes solely to God's goodness " and must "rely wholly on the free promise of righteousness "119 The believer's works "have no place in laying a foundation to strengthen the conscience but are of value only when taken a posteriori For there is nowhere that fear which is able to establish full assurance For if they begin to judge it by good works, nothing will be more uncertain or more feeble, for indeed, if works be judged of themselves, by their imperfection they will no less declare God's wrath than by their incomplete purity they testify to his benevolence "120 It is difficult, however, to make a one to one comparison between Calvin and the later Calvinists (especially the Puritans) on this point, since (a) Calvin was not scolding Puritans, but criticizing the Roman position and (b) since Calvin did not distinguish between faith and assurance, to base one's assurance on works was tantamount to founding salvation itself on the same The Puritans placed justification on the firm footing of an absolute, free promise of justification apart from works, and then allowed for the attainment of assurance by inferring justification from sanctification Therefore, the Puritans who emphasized the "golden chaine" and the *sylogismus practicus*, were not at odds with Calvin on the role of works in establishing faith, they did make a distinction between faith and assurance, however, that Calvin himself did not make and would probably not have approved in the light of his view of faith, as we shall see in our discussion of that topic Even if the Puritans could preserve the integrity of justifying faith as looking to Christ alone, the search for assurance very often led not to Christ without through inferior "graces" within, but left the anxious believer trapped inside the labyrinth of introspection 121 This, as we have seen, was the condition that concerns Goodwin. His goal is to "set Christ forth," although he affirms the conditional aspect of the covenant, placing him beyond any doubt as to his aversion to antinomianism 122

Conclusion

On one end there are those who have for some time argued that predestination as a metaphysical system was either Calvin's or later Calvinists' central dogma. Others insist that there is no such central dogma. We have argued that justification is, for Calvin and the Calvinists, the central dogma, while union with Christ in the covenant of grace forms the structure around which and method by which the system is arranged. In Calvin and Calvinism, union with Christ is a dominant theme, and this has all of the major features of covenant theology. Because, however, union with Christ has both objective and subjective aspects (just as the covenant has an absolute and conditional side), it is possible to so emphasize the application and experience of redemption that at times there appears to be a different concern. However, the Puritans are really only fleshing out the other side of the great doctrine of union with Christ, while not neglecting or losing the focus on the objective.

There are problems, however, with this emphasis by Goodwin's time and those like him who saw the conditional side pushing the absolute character of the covenant out of dominance attempted to redress the imbalance. In the *unio Christi* motif, there is both an objective and subjective element, in the covenantal framework, the same is true, although the synonymous terms are, respectively, absolute and conditional. While Calvin and the Calvinists, therefore, accept both elements, some Puritans emphasized one over the other. For Goodwin, however, the accent falls on the absolute character of the covenant. It all focuses on Christ as Mediator. If this concept of union with Christ were regarded as the organizing principle of the tradition, this would account for the differences in emphasis without resorting to exaggerated and reductionistic gulfs between Calvin and his successors.

From the foregoing we can conclude concerning Goodwin's position that if there is to be

assurance of saving faith, one must be assured of an absolute and unconditional promise and if a bipolar covenant is to be admitted, it must stress the divine side in order to avoid introspective despair. If the conditional character of the covenant is stressed, there is a heightened sense of anxiety over one's own possession of saving faith. It is in this light that we now begin our discussion of the nature of saving faith in Goodwin's system and its relation to assurance.

Notes to Chapter Three

1 Thomas Watson, *op cit*, pp 155-156

2 *ibid*

3 Ursinus's discussion of the covenant in the context of "Christ the Mediator" perfectly matches that of Westminster and its divines. Cf Ursinus's *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, op cit*, pp 90 ff. John W. Beardslee III remarks, "This covenant-idea had been present in Reformed theology from the first, indeed, it may perhaps be a more vital element in the first-generation Reformers than the double decree," although Cocceius may be credited with having given the most systematic and fleshed-out shape to this seminal notion (introduction to *Reformed Dogmatics Seventeenth Century Reformed Theology Through The Writings of Wollebius, Voetius, and Turretin* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965], p 21). Basel theologian Johannes Wollebius (1586-1629), for instance, in his *Compendium Theologiae Christianae*, places his discussion of the covenant in the context of the effectual call. A distinction is clearly made between a covenant made in creation, according to works, and in Christ, according to grace alone (*ibid*, p 117).

4 Perry Miller, in *The New England Mind, op cit*, argued that federal theology emerged as an attempt to counterbalance the absolute predestinarianism of Calvin, giving human responsibility a place in the system. Also, in his *Errand Into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), it is interesting to note, first, that Miller himself pointed out his indebtedness to George Park Fisher's *The History of Christian Doctrine* (1896) and Arthur Cushman McGiffert's *Protestant Thought Before Kant* (1919) for the description of federalism. However, he later complained that these distinct developments of Calvinism were inflated beyond anything Miller intended by those "not generally skilled in theological discrimination." He adds, "They published the happy tidings, in my name, that the Puritans were not and never had been Calvinists. Consequently, what was intended to be an investigation into the subtleties of human development has been vulgarized into a platitude obstructive both to living appreciation and to further analysis" (p 39, from chapter 3, "The Marrow of Divinity"). Examples from the work of those who point to Calvin's successors rather than to Calvin himself as the "problem" include Brian Armstrong, *The Amyraut Heresy*, R. T. Kendall, *op cit*, Holmes Rolston III, *Calvin versus The Westminster Confession*, also Holmes, "Responsible Man in Reformed Theology: Calvin vs The Westminster Confession," *Scottish Journal of Theology* (vol 23, no 2, May, 1970), Alan Clifford, *The Atonement and Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), J. B. Torrance, "Contract or Covenant," *Scottish Journal of Theology* (volume 23, no 1, February, 1970).

- 5 Cf Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, *op cit* Muller demonstrates that the entire discussion of the covenant takes place within the context of working out the main point of the system Christ the Mediator, and the Reformed christology neither “from above” (Chalcedonian) strictly nor “from below,” but historically (esp pp 146ff)
- 6 Holmes Rolston III, *Calvin versus The Westminster Confession*, *op cit*, p 34
- 7 *ibid*
- 8 J P Torrance, “Contract or Covenant,” *op cit*, p 62
- 9 The Westminster Confession, *op cit*, Ch VII, 5-6
- 10 St Augustine, *The City of God*, trans by Henry Bettenson and edited by David Knowles (New York Penguin, 1972), Book XVI, Chap 28, p 688
- 11 St Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, trans by Eugene Fairweather in *A Scholastic Miscellany Anselm to Ockham* (Philadelphia Westminster Press, 1961), pp 100-120, 135-183
- 12 Cf Heiko Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation* (Philadelphia Fortress, 1966), especially in relation to Gabriel Biel Also, in his contribution to *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, Charles E Trinkaus, ed, Oberman argues that nominalism’s emphasis on the *pactum* gives rise to a new theological emphasis (p 15) Cf Alister E McGrath, *Iustitia Dei A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification, The Beginnings to the Reformation* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1986) For instance, McGrath observes especially of the *via moderna* and *schola Augustiniana moderna*, the following “The covenantal, rather than ontological, and voluntarist, rather than intellectualist, foundations of late medieval theology may also be argued to have passed into the theology of the first phase of the Reformation” (p 183) It is worth noting that Goodwin heavily cites Scotus throughout his explanation of the covenant (vol 7, pp 500-600)
- 13 Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids Baker, 1979, reprinted from the 1891 edition of John Highland), pp 319-320
- 14 Calvin, *Institutes* 2 12 3, 2 17 3 It is remarkable, especially in the light of Calvin’s arguments in sections 1-5, that one could argue that the adoption of a federal framework (and with it, the “active obedience” and merit of Christ) is at odds with Calvin From this, it is clear that Calvin did not regard *iustificatio* as nothing more than *remissio*, if that excludes the imputation of merit or Christ’s obedience
- 15 Calvin, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1980), 117-118 Cf Ursinus, *op cit*, pp 2-3, for the consistency of an overarching Law-Gospel hermeneutic and covenant theology They are two ways of saying the same thing This seems apparent also in the later work of Bishop Ussher, *A Body of Divinity, or The Summe and Substance of Christian Religion, Catechetically propounded, and explained, by way of Questions and Answers, etc*, 3rd ed (London M F 1663) The work represents a thorough covenant theology (p 123 ff), with two parts God’s promise to us (“I will be your God”) and ours to him (“You will be my people”) (p 123) There are two covenants Law or Works and Free Promise or Grace, “which from the coming of Christ is called the Gospel” (p 124) Instead of hanging so much on the historical use of the word *foedus* and its development, should we not simply see the federal system as an elaboration on the Reformers’ Law-Gospel scheme? “What is the condition on mans part? The gift being most free on Gods part, nothing is required on mans part but the receiving of grace offered,” although this genuine faith is always followed by “new obedience” The Law and Gospel differ in that the Law “revealeth, this giveth” Also, “the Law promised life onely, the Gospel righteousnesse also Fourthly, the Law requireth perfect obedience, the Gospel the righteousnesse of faith, Rom 3 31 Fifthly, the Law revealeth sin, rebuketh us for it, and leaveth us in it but the Gospel doth reveale unto us the remission of sins, and freeth us from the punishment belonging thereunto Sixthly, the Law is the ministry of wrath, condemnation, and death The Gospel is the ministry of grace, justification and life Seventhly, the Law was grounded on mans own righteousnesse, requiring of

every man in his own person perfect obedience (Dt 27 26) and in default, for satisfaction, everlasting punishment (Ezek 18 14 Gal 3 10 12) but the Gospel is grounded on the righteousness of Christ, admitting payment, and performance, by another, in behalf of so many as receive it, (Gal 3 13,14)” (p 159) Again, this shows that the Puritans understood federalism as a pristinization of the Law-Gospel motif, not a departure from it Cf William Stoeber, *op cit*, p 82

16 *ibid*

17 Paul Helm, “Calvin and the Covenant Unity and Continuity,” *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol LIV, no 4, Oct -Dec , 1982, p 79

18 Calvin, *Institutes* 2 16 5

19 Calvin, *Institutes* 2 10 4

20 Paul Helm, *ibid*

21 *ibid*, p 81

22 Tony Lane, *op cit*, p 106 There is an obvious sympathy for the Eastern notion of “recapitulation” and the East’s generally less forensic approach among some proponents of the “discontinuity” thesis At certain points, in fact, Calvin’s explicitly “federal” and forensic language is reinterpreted as organic rather than representative, especially in T F and J B Torrance

23 Cited in Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p 149 In this section Wallace provides a summary of the development of *foedus* in Reformed scholasticism Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), in his *Loci Communes* (1560), distinguished between a general covenant and a special covenant Caspar Olevianus’s formative *De substantia foderis gratuiti* (1585) distinguished not only a covenant of works and of grace, but an eternal covenant of redemption Amandus Polanus (1561-1610) was also fleshing out the christologically-oriented predestinarianism of the Reformed churches, while Ursinus (1534-83), in Heidelberg, was distinguishing between a covenant of nature and covenant of grace, consistent with Musculus’ general and special covenant Cocceius (1603-69), Witsius (1636-1708), and Francis Turretin (1623-87) contributed to the mature “federalism” represented at Westminster and after Nevertheless, England had its own federal theologians Robert Rollock (1555-99) wrote of the two covenants of works and grace in *A Treatise on Effectual Calling* (1597) Dudley Fenner (1558-87), an associate of Thomas Cartwright, had these two covenants in his *Sacra Theologia* (1585) In his Church of England catechism, published one year before Calvin’s death, Alexander Nowell (also translator Calvin’s *Institutes*) declared, “Adam was the first parent of mankind therefore God endued him with those ornaments, to have them or lose them for him and his, that is, for all mankind ” Elsewhere he added, “For it cannot be that *Christ our head*, rising again, should suffer us, the members of his body, to be consumed and utterly destroyed by death ” The covenantal structure is found in Edward Fisher’s *Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645) and in Ames It is not only the guiding hand of Puritan Nonconformity, but is the structure of Bishop Ussher’s *A Body of Divinity*(1663)

24 *ibid*, p 162

25 Edmund Calamy, in A F Mitchell and J Struthers, ed , *Minutes of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, *op cit*, p 152

26 R T Kendall, *op cit*, pp 13ff

27 Goodwin, 7 520

28 7 522

29 Opening, vol 4

30 7 530

31 7 532

32 For the biblical-theological background, see *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*,

James Orr, General Editor (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1957), volume II

33 Calvin, *Institutes* 2.12.3

34 Goodwin, 7.540

35 Cf Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville Westminster/John Knox, 1991), where the authors persuasively argue that Bullinger was the formative covenant theologian, even though “Bullinger did not so much as mention predestination in *The Covenant*” (p. 25). This points up again the dangers in drawing a fine line between covenant theologians who were rigid supralapsarian who believed in limited atonement and insisted upon the centrality of predestination in the system, especially when Bullinger, for one, fails on each of these counts. The Zurich reformer was not only an infralapsarian, he affirmed only a single predestination (p. 25). William K. B. Stoever argues that Ursinus was the chief architect, ‘*A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven*,’ *op cit*, p. 81. Others have pointed to Musculus, Oecolampadius, or Olevianus, which simply points up how enthusiastic the Reformed scholastics were about the covenantal motif as a systematic framework and shows the rather remarkable consensus. As for Goodwin’s role in its development, he was more important than is often realized. Rather more a systematizer and editor than a creative theologian, Goodwin not only devoted much attention to the federal motif in his own writings, but pulled together the writings of his mentors which explored the theme, among them John Preston’s *Life Eternal* and *The New Covenant*, as well as Sibbes’ work on the subject.

36 McCoy and Baker point out that Martin Bucer, for instance, in his 1527 commentary on the Gospels, argued that there was only one covenant, with faith and love as its stipulations (p. 22). For perhaps the most thorough study, see David A. Weir’s *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

37 Goodwin, 7.540

38 *ibid*

39 7.22

40 4.31

41 7.49. As we have seen, this is exactly what Calvin says, *Institutes* 2.16.5 and in his commentary on Romans 5.

42 7.33

43 4.20

44 7.36-7

45 *The Formula of Concord*, trans. by T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), Epitome, Art. V, p. 477.

46 Goodwin, 4.274

47 Peter Toon, *op cit*, p. 86

48 4.231-4

49 *ibid*

50 Westminster Shorter Catechism, Questions 20-21, Westminster Confession, Chapter 8

51 Goodwin, 7.532

52 7.24, 243

53 Breward, introduction to *The Works of William Perkins* (Appleford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970), p. 84

54 *ibid*

55 Westminster Confession, Chapter 8

56 Kendall, *op cit*, pp. 13-16

57 Calvin, *Institutes* 3.23.1-3

58 Calvin writes: “But if we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves, and not even in God the Father, if we conceive him as severed from his Son Christ,

then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election" (*Institutes*, 3 24 5) But this raised the question of whether one is, in fact, self-deceived What does one do then? Here the Puritans attempt to answer the question in a way that differs from Calvin but does not violate his christocentric predestinarianism

59 We have argued this in the previous chapter By separating faith and assurance, Christ was still the "mirror of election," but the syllogisms led from the lesser (fruit of union with Christ) to the greater (Christ himself) Cf Stoeber, *op cit*, pp 128-129

60 Edmund Calamy, *Minutes*, *op cit*

61 *ibid*

62 Robert Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (London, 1645)

63 Richard Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, *op cit*, treats the Dortian position throughout his work

64 Kendall's thesis, like Brian Armstrong's (cf *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*), is simply a revival of Amyraut's own attempt to place himself within Calvinistic "orthodoxy," and relegate "the orthodox" beyond the parameters of faithfulness to Calvin Cf Roger Nicole, "John Calvin's View of the Extent of the Atonement," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985), pp 197-225

65 Kendall, p 13

66 J I Packer, "Calvin the Theologian," in *John Calvin*, ed by G E Duffield (Appleford, England Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966), p 151

67 Johann von Staupitz goes so far as to say that in predestination "Christ is put under obligation to save the elect," in contract-language that would have sounded familiar to federal theologians Each and every one of these penitential duties of all the elect the Lord imposed upon His own head Nor should it escape you that the suffering of the Son of God is sufficient for all, though it was not for all but for many that His blood was poured out," pp 179-192 Charles Hodge argues that the sufficiency-efficiency position (sufficient for the world, efficient for the elect alone) is simply "the Augustinian view," in vol 2 of his *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1946), pp 545-7 Alexander of Hales taught the sufficiency-efficiency distinction as early as the twelfth century

68 Luther's strong comments on predestination and its relation to the work of Christ in his early lectures on Romans (1515) and in *The Bondage of the Will* reveal a Luther who is still in the late medieval tradition of the *via Augustini moderna*

69 Heiko Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, *op cit*, pp 151-174

70 *ibid*, pp 175-200

71 *ibid*

72 Alan P F Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation* (Grand Rapids Baker, 1982), pp 30-35

73 Kendall, p 16

74 Calvin, comment on 1 John 2 2

75 *ibid*

76 Calvin, comment on Ro 5 18

77 Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans by J K S Reid (Greenwood, SC The Attic Press, 1961), p 56

78 Calvin, comment on 1 Tim 2.5

79 We cannot locate a single Puritan sermon from Preston to Goodwin on the extent of the atonement, although it is treated in the works of John Owen, Thomas Goodwin and other divines in their systematic theological works

80 Kendall, pp 13-16

81 The Belgic Confession (1564), Articles 14-17, (Grand Rapids. Christian Reformed Church Publications, 1987)

- 82 The Canons of the Synod of Dort, Chapter I, 2-4 (Grand Rapids Christian Reformed Church Publications, 1987) For a comparison with the Puritans, see John Murray, "Calvin, Dort and Westminster--A Comparative Study," in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches Essays in Commemoration of the Synod of Dort*, Peter Y De Jong, ed (Grand Rapids Reformed Fellowship, 1968), pp 150-160
- 83 Robert Letham, *op cit*, p 30 "Oecolampadius had already taught that Christ suffered 'for many and not for all, since many are called but few are chosen' Bucer had written of Christ's blood having redeemed and reconciled the elect So too Vermigli had opposed the idea that Christ died for all, accepting instead the scholastic distinction between the universal sufficiency and restricted efficacy of the death of Christ
- 84 J B Torrance, "Covenant and Contract," *op cit*, p 68
- 85 Calvin, *Institutes* 2 17 1 ff
- 86 Underscoring the subtleties that are often overlooked by simplistic arguments for discontinuity, Goodwin refers to John Cameron (1579-1625) more than any other source in his discussion of the covenant Cameron was a Scottish theologian whose career was spent mostly in France, articulating the hypothetical universalism that influenced Amyraut and became known as "Amyraldianism" Although he, therefore, denied the doctrine of particular redemption, he was considered a covenant theologian Once again, the package isn't so neat, as a non-particularist is nevertheless a leading federalist
- 87 "Bi-polar" refers to the nature of the covenant as both absolute (depending on God alone) and conditional (received and ratified by human response) It is employed especially by John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought*, *op cit*
- 88 Kendall, p 43
- 89 Goodwin, "Christ Set Forth," *op cit*
- 90 Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 14-17
- 91 Tyndale, *Answer to More* (Oxford Bodleian Library, PS, 70, 106, 199)
- 92 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 17 6, for instance
- 93 Cf Leonard J Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," *Church History*, vol 20 (1951), pp 37-58
- 94 *ibid*
- 95 This is the manner of the treatment in the Westminster Confession, Chapter 8
- 96 *ibid*, Chapter 8, Section 8
- 97 *ibid*, Chapter 14, Sections 1-6
- 98 *ibid*, Chapter 16, Section 2
- 99 Perkins, *Works*, Courtenay edition, p 537
- 100 Michael Jenkins, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol 43, pp 321-349, "John Cotton and the Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638 A Profile of Experiential Individualism in American Puritanism")
- 101 William Ames, *op cit*, p 151
- 102 *ibid*
- 103 Joel Beeke, *The Assurance of Faith Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (N Y Peter Lang, 1991, p 350 fn 4
- 104 Goodwin, 8 247
- 105 William K B Stoever, *op cit*, p 27
- 106 *ibid*
- 107 *ibid*
- 108 *ibid*
- 109 Cf Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1981)

110 Richard Greaves, in *Saints and Rebels Seven Non-Conformists in Stuart England* (Macon Mercer University Press, 1985), notes of this group, "The Family of Love, with its hodgepodge of radical ideas, was deeply rooted in Elizabethan England, and many of the revolutionary views of the mid-century sectaries were advanced much earlier by Elizabethan Separatists" (p 3) The group is even referred to as early as Thomas Rogers, in his *The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England* (1586) as hostile to free-grace notions

111 William K B Stoever, *op cit*, p 45

112 *ibid*

113 Thomas Shepard, *Cases Resolved*, p 320

114 John von Rohr writes, "Particularly grievous in this misinterpretation is the work of Kendall who dismisses Puritan predestinarianism out of hand as simply an ironic, intellectual remnant in what he portrays as a Calvinist system massively corrupted by a flagrant emphasis on voluntarism," *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta Scholar's Press, 1986), p 31

115 John Owen, 6 338 In fact, Sibbes lists the differences between a covenant and a testament, although he is willing to follow the common usage First, he says, "a testament is indeed a covenant, and something more," namely, "It is a covenant sealed by death" Second, "a testament bequeatheth good things merely of love," whereas " a covenant requireth something to be done " Sibbes explains

In a testament, there is nothing but receiving the legacies given God's covenant now is such a testament, sealed with the death of Christ, made out of love merely for our good, for what can God receive of us? All is legacies from him, and though he requireth conditions, requireth faith and obedience, yet he himself fulfilleth what he asketh, giveth what he requireth, giveth it as a legacy Thus you see that the communion and fellowship of man with God, must either be by a covenant of works or by a covenant of grace And we must distinguish exactly between these two covenants and the periods of them (Richard Sibbes, vol 6, p 4)

There is nothing, therefore, in the covenant of grace that is purely conditional, even the conditions (faith and repentance unto life and sanctification and perseverance consequently) are promised and given freely and absolutely in the covenant of grace, on the sole ground of Christ's obedience and death The conditional covenant was the covenant of works "Do this and you shall live," whereas the covenant of grace places the indicative before the imperative "Live and you shall do this "

116 *ibid*

117 Goodwin, 8 194

118 *ibid*

119 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 14 19

120 *ibid*

121 Goodwin, 3 321, 293

122 *ibid*

Chapter Four

The Essence of Saving Faith

In the *Institutes*, Calvin reminds us that the objective work of Christ, if it remains outside of us, is to no avail. We must receive Christ and become united to him in order to receive the inheritance of God the Father.¹ And it is faith that is given the specific role of connecting the sinner to the person and work of Christ. This emphasis on Christ the Mediator in the *unio Christi* or the covenant of grace is central not only for Calvin, but for the entire tradition.² Goodwin shares the reformer's commitment to the *unio cum Christo* motif, but does he go further than Calvin, toward the antinomian side, in placing faith in a position subsequent to that union in an effort to protect monergistic free grace? Does he regard faith as the act of God or as a human act initiated and freely caused by divine graciousness? To that end, we shall consider what may well be regarded the most important topic in this matter of assurance, then, having defined faith, we shall be better prepared to explain its relation to the work of Christ.

The Elements and Seat of Faith

The reformers defined faith as possessing three elements: *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*.³ In order to assent to and trust in the work of God in Christ, one had to know certain things. But it was not enough to know facts, one had to assent to these facts and, furthermore, accept these objective actions of God as sufficient for one's own redemption and reconciliation with God.⁴ In Reformed theology, effectual calling precedes faith, but is itself not the instrumental cause of justification. Rather, it brings faith and, along with it, repentance, sanctification, perseverance,

mortification, and so forth. Union with Christ both imputes and imparts the righteousness of the Mediator, so it was quite natural for the Reformed scholastics to borrow the medieval language of *habitus* to describe this change in the sinner from hatred of God to trust, a disposition that was required for the exercise of justifying faith.⁵

In spite of the cavils, Goodwin was concerned that not everyone was keeping the distinctions clear enough and that initial conversion was increasingly being seen as somehow sharing with faith the role of instrumental cause in justification. This, of course, would return to the medieval notion⁶ and while that fatal confusion cannot be found in the major systematic or polemical works of the mainstream Reformed and Puritan scholastics, Goodwin was worried enough about implications for popular piety that he was eager to distinguish any *habitus*, including love, from justifying faith.

Jesus Christ he is more, far more jealous of your faith than of your love. He will give you leave to love simultaneously other things besides himself and with himself, but he will not give you leave to believe on any, to look for help from any but from him. This faith is reserved for him alone. The eye of a man that believeth is shut up to all things either in his own heart, or whatsoever else there is that may help him, and his eyes are only upon Christ, as the phrase is in 2 Chron xx 12. the soul goes out of itself naked, a naked soul, to a naked Christ, empty, and stripped of all things.⁷

Furthermore, Goodwin follows the traditional Protestant defense of *sola fide* as expressing more than mere intellectual assent. "The height of popish religion, and of many others also, is to converse with maxims and articles of faith, and take we the soundest of those truths they profess, yet their faith of them is but a fellowship as with so many propositions theological, with a general knowledge of and assent to them."⁸ But Goodwin surprises his readers by comparing this to those who might consider themselves immune to such Romish notions.

Others, ask them their religion they declare it to be a belief of what the Scriptures say to be true, and to give assent to them (which we do also, and receive with all acceptance all the sayings and truths delivered in the word of God) And then they stir up the principles of virtue that are in them naturally, edged by gospel motives of heaven and hell, which, with the aids of the Spirit assisting these principles in the will, is the whole of their religion,⁹

but they are not interested in being united to Christ by faith alone Faith is not a mere assent to propositions (though it is not true faith without that), but it requires the exercise of personal trust There is no room in Goodwin's system for "a mere contemplative speculation"¹⁰ It is difficult to comprehend how the Puritans can be considered speculative rationalists with such definitions as the following, concerning faith "And indeed, if we would define faith," asked Goodwin, "what is it but the power of God drawing the heart to Christ and holding it to him?"¹¹ Even the Aristotelian categories seem to be admitted only upon exegetical merit for Goodwin. For instance, "the *virtual cause* of regeneration is the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (emphasis added)¹² And 1 Peter 1:3 does seem to suggest precisely what that phrase intends Nevertheless, the Puritans are quite at ease in criticising classical speculation and sophistry

Like Calvin and many subsequent thinkers in the Reformed tradition, Goodwin sometimes speaks of the heart, at other times the will, and at still other times, the mind, being the primary faculty involved in the exercise of faith¹³ Moved perhaps by his own passionate images of "Christ set forth," Goodwin states, "It is the will, i e , the heart especially, that is the seat of faith"¹⁴ But it is as difficult in Goodwin as in any of his predecessors to distinguish the mind from the heart, since this "eminent and principle act of the will" (i e , believing) "is trust, is believing on him" Regardless of where one locates faith, it can be made into a work (if the seat is

the intellect, justification may be made to depend on a certain measure of knowledge that one can empirically test, etc.) For Goodwin (as for the entire tradition), the issue of concern over turning faith into a work is not faith's proper seat, but the object and acts of this faith. For instance, although Goodwin affirms that the seat of faith is the heart and will, he adds, "There have been some that would make the act of faith in the will to be a cleaving unto Christ for his excellencies. The truth is, that is nothing but love, it is not faith. It is not love answereth to that in Christ, but it is a trust and believing on him."¹⁵ In other words, some of the Puritans so emphasized the *impartation* of righteousness (infused habits, etc.) in the union that faith was made simply into a means of fulfilling certain conditions. Goodwin is one example that locating the seat of faith in the heart and will does not necessarily equal "voluntarism," if by that one means some proto-Arminian notion. Furthermore, Goodwin is anxious not to confuse faith with reason while, at the same time, maintaining that reason supports faith.

And therefore this sight of faith it is called sight, because it is thus elevated above all rational knowledge of Christ whatsoever, it is a further thing [notice, further, not contrary], *though joined with it* it is (I say) superadded to reason, let it be elevated and enlightened ever so much by the Holy Ghost in a rational way (emphasis added)¹⁶

Nevertheless, faith affirms reason

I will only give you a caution, that I may not be misunderstood, for as this is a great truth, so I would clear it from mistakes. The light of faith doth not destroy reason, but makes use of it, subordinates reason to itself, restoreth, rectifies it, and then useth it, even as reason makes use of sense, though the acts of reason, the thoughts of a man in a rational soul, are clean differing to what he hath in the sensitive soul, yet reason makes use of sense. The more rationally the preacher discourseth out of the word, and lays open the meaning thereof in a rational way, so much the better, because it is suited to the minds of men; yet where the Holy Ghost works faith, he conveys a

light beyond all that reason, though he makes use of that reason too ¹⁷

One must go to Scripture with his or her reason, but if one is really going to understand it, the Spirit will have to add this light ¹⁸ Explained in this light, though Goodwin makes more out of it than Calvin, it would seem that Goodwin's "mysticism" is Calvin's doctrine of "illumination" ¹⁹ In this nature-grace discussion, Calvin not only emphasizes the intellectual aspect of faith, but insists that reason is insufficient, though not antithetical, with regard to saving faith, "for faith is much higher than human understanding" While God will neither ignore nor subvert nature, it is clear that conversion requires a supernatural illumination and Calvin's emphasis on the internal witness of the Holy Spirit cannot be denied ²⁰

While voluntarism and intellectualism had been hotly debated throughout the middle ages, neither the reformers nor the Puritans seem to have a problem recognizing the involvement of every faculty in the act of faith From John chapter six, Goodwin argues that the act of faith itself involves, first, seeing the Son, then coming to him, third, believing on him, "and indeed every faculty, and every power of the soul in believing doth put for a several sprig, a several fibres into Jesus Christ" ²¹ Because the Scriptures offer a variety of expressions concerning the exercise of faith, it should not be surprising to find the same variety in the reformers and the Puritans without implying contradiction Goodwin demonstrates, for instance, his concern for faith as knowledge in his discussion of the "Christ in you" motif of Galatians 4:19

He doth not say, until you are formed in Christ, but until Christ be formed in you He cannot mean the person of Christ dwelling in them Why? Because that is not formed, that was formed in the womb of the virgin, and now is glorious in heaven, therefore it must be the right notion and apprehension of Christ in the gospel that he meaneth It is as if he had said, 'til you be fully evangelised, and as both Piscator and Pareus interpret it, till you be fully restored to your former true knowledge of Christ, now you are full of Moses, he is formed in you, that appears by the

twenty-first verse, for there were some amongst them that were so full of the law, that there was nothing but law almost in them, now in opposition to this, saith he, I long till such time as Christ be formed in you, till there is a complete knowledge of Christ, according to the nature and genius of the gospel begotten in you And this is called Christ²²

The knowledge of the Gospel is the meaning of Christ's being formed in us, metaphorically speaking Commenting on Colossians 2 2, Goodwin notes,

you shall find 'riches of assurance' joined with a saint's knowledge, which, 1 Thes 1 4, 5, is made a note of election, and not in another Scotus says that to get a true and perfect knowledge in divine things, *fides infusa et acquisita*, both faith infused and acquired, are necessary Unless faith rivets the principles of divine knowledge into the heart, all the conclusions hang on uncertainties, and fall down in the end²³

Goodwin was not alone in these sentiments, as John Owen similarly regarded faith as a matter of the heart Justifying faith is "the heart's approbation of the way of justification and salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ proposed in the gospel, as proceeding from the grace, wisdom, and love of God, with its acquiescency therein as unto its own concernment and condition"²⁴ In other words, it is the knowledge of God's means of saving (i e , the gospel), assent ("approbation") to its truthfulness, and trust ("acquiescency therein as unto its own concernment and condition")²⁵ Where then is the radical shift of emphasis to the will upon which the alleged discontinuity depends? This new voluntarism that has replaced *notitia* and *fiducia* is not readily apparent in Owen or Goodwin In fact, Owen argues,

The most frequent declaration of the nature of faith in the Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, is by this trust, and that because it is that act of it which *composeth* the soul, and brings it unto all the rest it can attain Whether this trust or confidence shall be esteemed of the *essence* of faith, or a that which, on the first fruit and working of it, we are found in the exercise of, we need not positively determine I place it, therefore, as that which belongs unto justifying faith, and is inseparable from it For if all we have spoken before concerning faith may be comprised under the notion of a firm assent and persuasion, yet it cannot be so if any such assent be

conceivable exclusive of this trust²⁶

Furthermore, not only do Owen and Goodwin insist upon the full definition of faith popularized by the Reformers, they refuse to add to that definition any “voluntaristic” elements that would bring obedience or even repentance into the definition of faith. Owen writes

Concerning this faith and trust, it is earnestly pleaded by many that *obedience* is included in it. Socinus, and those who follow him absolutely, do make obedience to be the essential form of faith, which is denied by Episcopius. The Papists distinguish between faith *in-formed* and faith *formed* by charity which comes to the same purpose.²⁷

Owen has no use for the subtle arguments abounding over the definition of faith, which seem to be far removed from the simple and straightforward biblical statements.²⁸ Whatever may be said about Theodore Beza’s emphasis on assent rather than knowledge and on *fiducia* as a result, but not of the essence, of saving faith, there is simply no neat and simple way of explaining the Puritans as indiscriminate heirs of Beza.²⁹ Beyond the arguments over the Bezan or Rhineland links, the opinions expressed by Owen and Goodwin could be represented by a wide range of Puritan divines, underscoring our initial point that Puritanism is simply English Protestantism with a reformist (and therefore potentially moralistic) impulse. It is just that broad and varied in its representative views and positions. Even at the Westminster Assembly, there were debates on points that the discontinuity thesis seems to regard as settled among the English Calvinists.

A shift may be detected, perhaps, from locating the act of faith primarily in the intellect, to the will. But it is difficult to say that this then becomes as neat and tidy a definition among English Puritans as it is for modern scholars. Perkins is not so much a voluntarist or an intellectualist, since, although he locates faith in the understanding, it is more properly in the conscience, he says, which is a part of the understanding. Perkins is a Ramist in method, and yet

this is the issue over which Beza and Arminius had temporarily parted ways, the latter embracing the new philosophical method. Kendall's argument that in the Puritans faith shifts from persuasion (Calvin) to the will (Beza) does not take into account such declarations as Owen's and Goodwin's, in their Savoy Declaration, that faith is "a gracious resting upon the free promises of God in Jesus Christ for mercy, with a *firm persuasion of heart* that God is a reconciled Father *unto us* in the Son of his love" (emphasis added) ³⁰

Thus, English Calvinists were assured that Scripture provided such a rich and varied explanation of faith that there were many different, though not contradictory, ways in which it could be legitimately expressed. It was saving knowledge (which is why Goodwin argued that the Gospel is a mystery to heretics, with the Arminians especially in his sights),³¹ a firm persuasion of the heart, and a confident hope that everything Christ did in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, was of such efficacy that it could save the greatest sinner. Owen approved Goodwin's position in locating the seat of faith primarily in the understanding "Faith is in the understanding, in respect of its being and subsistence" ³²

If one faculty does appear to find a supreme place in Goodwin's theology, in spite of his explicit location of faith's seat in the heart, it is the intellect, where the knowledge is received, assessed, and acted upon. It is by "placarding" Christ publicly before the eyes of the sinner and believer alike that faith is begun, strengthened, and improved. And yet, this is something that moves the whole person, the heart and will included in every exercise.

Faith and Assurance

The relationship of the preceding question over the seat of faith is directly related to the issue of faith and assurance. For instance, Goodwin recognizes, "Now if the main act of faith were an assenting to an overpowering light that Christ is mine, and a setting down that my sins are

pardoned, then the main act that made the union were in the understanding”³³ Once again, it is alleged that the “Calvinists” departed from Calvin over the nature of faith and assurance, the former separating them³⁴ The departure is often attributed to the Rhineland theologians and Tyndale³⁵ Is Goodwin following the Reformed scholastics on the Continent in a departure from Calvin’s basic understanding of faith and assurance or is his understanding a distinct mark of English Calvinism? This point bears a brief inquiry Ursinus insists, “For we believe and know ourselves with certainty to be elect to life insofar as we hold fast to belief in Christ and belief in life eternal”³⁶ It is this same view that we find in Tyndale’s *Introduccion Unto The Pistle To The Romayns* Faith, for Tyndale, is entirely wrought by God and is “a lyvely and stedfaste truste in the favoure of God where with we committe oure selves all to gedyr un to God, and that truste is so surely grounded and standeth so fast in our hertes that a man wolde not once doute of it, though he shulde dye a thousand tymes therefore”³⁷ John Bradford argued that faith and assurance were one and the same,³⁸ John Downname defined faith as “a certaine assurance of Gods love and favour in Christ”³⁹ There is some assurance in all faith, says Downname, yet he accepts the practical syllogism⁴⁰ One wonders why that would be necessary if faith, in its very essence, carries sufficient assurance, but this points up the pastoral reflection that was taking place especially within this generation For John Frith, to exercise faith is to be “surely persuaded” by God’s forgiveness in Christ⁴¹ But in Frith we already see the distinguishing of faith and assurance developing “And if it be so that thou canst not so believe or be assured that thou hast not forgiveness of thy sins, yet despair not,” after all, justification is instantaneous, “and yet he giveth us not so quickly the grace to feel it”⁴²

A common distinction among the Puritans in this discussion is between faith as “direct” and “reflex” act and this is Goodwin’s customary way of discussing the difference between faith (direct act) and assurance (reflex act). Other terms and phrases were added to identify what most Puritans agreed upon. That the act of faith, in receiving Christ for justification, was distinct from assurance of pardon. In other words, a great many Christians will receive Christ for justification, but lack the assurance that they are justified. If a lack of assurance implies a defective faith, Goodwin and fellow-Puritans wondered, are those who are not assured of their justification really not justified, even if they are looking to Christ? Answering that this would prevent weak believers from ever attaining true assurance (since they lacked the experience at present), the Puritans counseled men and women to look to Christ directly for their salvation, and not to despair if they did not discern within themselves a subjective experience of being assured.⁴³ In other words, “full assurance” was something to be attained through Christian maturity, and for many who had now become anxious over the nature of saving faith (and who had before been anxious over their works), this was calculated to liberate

Before we examine Goodwin’s position in this debate, it is important to underscore that the experimental tradition of English Calvinism is not itself at one on this matter of faith and assurance. Even Perkins follows this union of faith and assurance. “Q How doth a man apply Christ and all his benefits unto himself? A This applying is done by assurance, when a man is verily persuaded by the Holy Spirit of God’s favour towards himself particularly and of the forgiveness of his own sins.” And yet, the least measure of faith is “when a man of an humble spirit doth not yet feel the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins and yet is persuaded that they

are pardonable,” and so asks God to pardon⁴⁴ Therefore, it seems that assurance is objectively within the definition of saving faith If assurance is somehow included in the definition of faith, though its experience is even imperceptible at times, is there such a gulf between Perkins, for instance, and Calvin? In *A Dialogue of the State of a Christian Man Gathered Here and There Out of the Sweet and Savoury Writings of Master Tyndale and Master Bradford*, Perkins has two interlocutors--Timotheus, and Eusebius “T How know you that God hath forgiven your sin? E Because I am a sinner and he is both able and willing to forgive me T I grant that he is able to forgive you, but how know you that he will? You know your sins are very great E I grant But Christ’s passion is far greater and although my sins were as red as scarlet and as purple, yet they shall be white as snow and as soft as wool ” Is he worried that God may forsake him? “Nay that I will never grant, for I am certainly persuaded of the favour of God, even to the salvation of my soul ” Timotheus exclaims that he wants to know how to have this assurance First, God’s kindness to him in creating him in his own image, second, that he was born in a Christian home, where he was baptized, and not raised in “papistry” or sectarianism Next, he has the Holy Spirit as a pledge He used to despise the preaching of the Word, but no longer He loves to pray He loves the brethren⁴⁵ Perkins the catechist is “certainly persuaded of the favour of God,” but his inquirer is anxious over his own state Therefore, Perkins reminds him of the lesser effects of faith to the existence of true and saving faith itself To be sure, Calvin did not seem to think that one had to do this at all, since faith *is* assurance⁴⁶ And yet, he conceded, “Surely, while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety On the other hand, we say that

believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief”⁴⁷ Where Calvin differs from the Puritans, then, is on this single point. For Calvin, certainty is “tinged with doubt” and assurance is “assailed by some anxiety,” but it is still certainty and assurance all the same.⁴⁸ Both Calvin and the Puritans, however, are describing the same Christian experience, both are admitting doubt, anxiety and “perpetual conflict with [one’s] own unbelief,” as normal Christian experience, and both see Christ as the object of faith.

However, Tony Lane cites the following remark from Calvin in order to demonstrate the discontinuity with the Puritans. “Those who doubt their possession of Christ and their membership in His Body are reprobates.”⁴⁹ But this is precisely why so many of the Puritans were intent on finding another way of comforting those who struggled with their assurance even as Calvin himself said they would.⁵⁰ It was not because the Puritans wanted to encourage doubt, but because they wanted to respond sensitively to the reality of widespread doubt in their own congregations--in spite of clear preaching on Christ and his objective work. Dewey Wallace cites an example of just such a pastoral problem. “John Downe in 1601 found a ‘godly Matron’ of Bristol afflicted, feeling she lacked faith because she did not have assurance of salvation, and when he told her that was not necessary, she responded that ‘hitherto I have been taught, Faith is no other than Assurance.’ Downe therefore preached in Bristol on the subject and declared that assurance is distinct and follows faith.”⁴¹ By Goodwin’s time, there was a widespread satisfaction with this settlement to the pastoral problem over assurance and anxiety. Goodwin demonstrates this pastoral sensitivity in his rationale. “The first act of faith cannot be assurance, for the thing must be made mine, before I can believe it is mine, and afterward temptation comes, and overthrows a man’s assurance,

but it never overthrows a man's believing on Christ"⁵² Thus, the Puritan view was motivated, not by encouraging introspective doubt, but by encouraging believers to keep on trusting in Christ regardless of their experience of assurance

Another example of how this worked itself out (at least on paper) is found in Archbishop James Ussher's *A Body of Divinity* First, Ussher insists that the seat of faith is not only one faculty, but "the whole intelligent nature is the seat of Faith" He then asks,

But is it not necessary to Iustification, to be assured that my sins are pardoned, and that I am justified? No that is no act of faith as it justifyeth, but an effect and fruit that followeth after Iustification For no man is justified by believing that he is justified, for he must be justified before he can beleeve it But faith as it justifyeth, is a resting upon Christ to obtain pardon, the acknowledging him to be the onely Saviour, and the hanging upon him for salvation It is the direct act of Faith that justifyeth, that whereby I do beleeve it is the reflect act of faith that assures, that whereby I know I do beleeve, and it comes by way of argumentation thus

Maj Whosoever relyeth upon Christ the Saviour of the world for Iustification and pardon is actually justified and pardoned

Min But I doe truly rely upon Christ for justification and pardon

Concl Therefore I undoubtedly beleeve that I am justified and pardoned But many times both the former propositions may be granted to be true, and yet a weake Christian want strength to draw the conclusion⁵³

Goodwin distinguishes between "faith of dependence" and "faith of assurance,"⁵⁴ also, between sheer faith (*actus*) and waiting upon God (assurance)⁵⁵ Assurance, like faith, is linked to knowledge for Goodwin "Unless faith rivets the principles of divine knowledge into the heart, all the conclusions hang on uncertainties, and fall down in the end"⁵⁶ Again, it must be recognized that this later Reformed distinction was motivated by a pastoral concern for despair To be sure, there are many people who obtain a profound sense of being forgiven and assured of God's favor And yet, are there not many others who, though they really are trusting in Christ and are objectively assured of pardon, do not experience this blessedness? Are they to be told that they

are not truly justified until they know for certain that they are so? Goodwin and Owen were agreed on this point, the latter offering the following defense

I no way doubt but many thousands of believers, whose apprehensions of the nature, properties, and conditions of things, as they are in themselves, are low, weak, and confused, yet, having received the Spirit of adoption, bearing witness with their spirits that they are children of God, and having the testimony in themselves, have been taken up into as high a degree of comforting and cheering assurance, and that upon the most infallible foundation imaginable (for 'the Spirit beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth,' 1 John v 6), as ever the most seraphically illuminated person in the world attained unto. Yea, in the very graces themselves of faith and uprightness of heart, there is such a seal and stamp, impressing the image of God upon the soul, as, without any reflex act or actual contemplation of those graces themselves, have an influence into the establishment of the souls of men. 57

Nevertheless, there is the other danger of building one's assurance on the foundation of a general moral improvement. What happens in times of crisis for such people?

Must that little evidence which they have of their acceptance with God be therefore necessarily built upon such bottoms, or rather tops, as are visible to them in hypocrites, so that upon their apostasy they must needs not only try and examine themselves, but conclude, to their disadvantage and disconsolation, that they have no true faith? 'Credat Apella' 58

Owen's nemesis, John Goodwin, built assurance on the foundation of "upright walking," without which one's "comfort and consolation is thought to vanish." "But that the Scripture builds up our assurance on other foundations is evident," Owen insisted.⁵⁹ Such remarks should lead us to examine whether the Puritan (at least, the high Calvinist) view really was that distinct from Calvin's. After all, here we have another example of a federal Calvinist criticizing an Arminian for founding assurance on legalistic introspection.

While Goodwin distinguished faith and assurance even more sharply than Perkins had done, did this represent a serious departure from Calvin's doctrine of assurance? First, Calvin insisted that

evidences could assist in comforting and assuring the believer, upon one condition that such evidences are used only *a posteriori*. In other words, they cannot be used to lay the foundation of assurance, since that is already occupied by the promise of the Gospel, which is external and objective.⁶⁰ Could it be that Calvin's distinction between gathering assurance in an *a posteriori* versus an *a priori* manner parallels the Puritan distinction between faith as a "direct" and a "reflex" act? In other words, Goodwin is clear, as we shall see in the next chapter, in his insistence that the only object of our direct act of faith is Christ as he is offered in the Gospel. Evidences (external or the internal witness of the Holy Spirit) are only allowed when the believer asks, "Am I truly believing in Christ?", not when one asks, "What must I do to be saved?" This seems to satisfy Calvin's requirement of settling faith on Christ, but allowing the evidence of faith to help comfort the believer in his or her assurance.

In other words, for Calvin, there is a distinction between faith itself and the experience of degrees in possessing it. Thus far, that is no different from the Puritan distinction between faith and "full assurance," or the faith of recumbency (direct act) and the reflex act (faith of assurance). Neither Calvin nor the Puritans believed that assurance was ever perfect in this life, in fact, Calvin observed that Christians are always "party unbelievers" throughout their lives.⁶¹ Then for Goodwin's part, he and his fellow Puritans were certainly not arguing for the abandonment of the Protestant definition of faith as *notitia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*, nevertheless, in the words of Thomas Brooks, "It is one thing for me to believe and another thing for me to believe that I believe."⁶² Perkins believed that assurance was part of the essence of weak faith, while in strong faith it is faith's fruit "above and beyond its essence."⁶³ But how different is that from Calvin's comments? As long as the weakest believer has the rudiments of assurance, in principle, the

suggested chasm between Calvin and the Calvinists closes significantly⁶⁴ According to Kendall, Perkins wants to affirm both Calvin and Beza. “He really embraces a distinction between faith and assurance but he never admits this is what he does”⁶⁵ Perhaps he does not admit a departure precisely because there is no doctrinal departure of note. If Calvin admits a distinction between the act of trust and the experience of trust, degrees of faith and assurance, and allows for evidences to be used *a posteriori*, then the dogmatic shift appears rather slight. Whatever cleavage that still appears is even more nearly closed in the Greater Catechism of the Savoy Declaration, penned by Goodwin and Owen, where saving faith is defined as “a *firm persuasion of heart* that God is a reconciled Father *unto us* in the Son of his love.” Note that “persuasion” implies assurance in principle and the fact that this persuasion is “that God is a reconciled Father *unto us*” explicitly conveys the belief that assurance is part of the essence of faith in the sense Calvin intended against the school-men⁶⁶

It must be noted that the doctrine of assurance is being refined and in the process there are distinctions that were not a part of Calvin’s discourse on the subject. One should not confuse refinements with departures. For instance, one begins to see the emergence of a distinction between “the being” (*esse*) and “well-being” (*bene-esse*) of faith. Generally speaking, the Puritans, insist that assurance is not part of the *bene-esse* of faith, but many explicitly state that it is part of faith’s *esse*⁶⁷ The later Scottish Puritan, Thomas Boston (1676-1732), remarked, “How Faith can grow in any to a full Assurance, if there be no Assurance in the Nature of it, I cannot comprehend”⁶⁸ John Dod (d 1645) distinguished between “Moon-shine” assurance and “Sun-shine” assurance, the first given when one assents to and trusts in the promise and the second attained with “full assurance”⁶⁹ Therefore, there is a form of assurance in the essence of faith itself. This was not a point upon which there was entire agreement, but that is not recognized by

the discontinuity thesis

Furthermore, one of the reasons that the Puritans made such a sharp distinction (much sharper, indeed, than Calvin would have admitted), was of the fear that the believer would assume that a grace that is proper to the well-being of faith would be regarded as a necessary evidence of its essence. When we read the Puritans insisting that we must not lose heart if we do not possess assurance, we should perhaps read this in terms of what they called “full assurance,” and the experience of unwavering security. This, as we have already demonstrated, would have received Calvin’s full approval.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that the Puritans emphasized this distinction beyond anything that we find in Calvin. Goodwin did affirm that there was an element, a root, of assurance in the faith of even weak believers.⁷⁰ And yet, he was anxious to affirm that there are many believers who never experience this comfort through the course of their whole lives as Christians. Again, this was calculated to offer relief to those who had concluded that they were not truly justified because they did not experience “full assurance,” and Calvin himself never argued that “full assurance” was every believer’s possession. Nevertheless, the Puritans--and here Goodwin is especially keen on the idea--push this distinction to its limits. The *sylogismus practicus* and *sylogismus mysticus* come into use, not in order to frighten terrified consciences, but in order to comfort them in their lack of assurance. A lack of assurance is not necessarily a sign of a lack of faith, the Puritans insisted, to the great comfort of many struggling with this issue. Furthermore, at least as it was employed by its leading exponents, the practical syllogism was never meant to base assurance any more than salvation itself on works, but to infer effects from their cause. In his *Summe of Scripture*, Tyndale says that “works can give no manner of

certainty”⁷¹

By Goodwin’s time, however, the practical syllogism had not only been used to help those with weak faith obtain some assurance through observable effects, it had become for many Puritans an instrument of despair and excessive introspection. Perkins’s *golden chaine*, by which one follows the inferior (effects of union with Christ) to the superior (Christ himself) seems to Goodwin to be now replaced with a devotion to graces as the end rather than the means. Goodwin replaces the emphasis on the practical syllogism with an emphasis on the objective work of Christ “set forth” before the eyes of faith. Through this “setting forth” of Christ through Word and sacrament, the flame of assurance is fanned and the mystical syllogism (the “whispering” of Christ directly to the soul that it is assured of that which it eyes by faith) practically renders the evidences from the practical syllogism irrelevant. This “immediate report of [God’s] love” is “as the north-east passage to the Indies, the shortest and speediest way of comforting and upholding the heart when found out”⁷². In the matter of faith itself, nothing is to be considered but the work of Christ, but even in our assurance (which depends in some measure on sanctification), “It is Christ, in whom the soul rests and hath comfort in, and not in its grace and their rejoicing is not in it [inward grace], but in Christ, their confidence being pitched upon him, and not upon their grace”⁷³. At long last, Goodwin offers his own rather unusual practical syllogism “In spite of sinning the true believer comes to God on terms of a covenant of grace and is saved, I come on those terms. Therefore I am saved”⁷⁴. Richard Sibbes (1579-1635) is an important link to Goodwin as one member of that illustrious band in the “Spiritual Brotherhood.” As Paul Bayne (d. 1617) succeeded Perkins at Cambridge and converted Sibbes, it was Sibbes who converted John Preston (d. 1628), the divine who so shaped the thought of Thomas Goodwin.⁷⁵ Richard Sibbes’ treatise on assurance counsels, “Reason not this, whether God hath elected or Christ hath died for thee. This is the secret will of

God. But the commandment is to believe in Christ. This binds.”⁷⁶

Therefore, according to Goodwin, the faith of assurance “is a reflex act of the mind upon its own act, but justifying faith is a direct act on Christ.” One act looks to Christ, the other, to the act of faith and its effects.⁷⁷ Luther’s and Calvin’s view collapses consequent into antecedent act, Goodwin argues, because, “This first act of believing is not a studying of, or reflecting upon, its own act, as seeing that he believes, but it is a doing the thing in a direct manner.”⁷⁸ But were Luther and Calvin actually saying that believing in Christ was the same as knowing that one possessed true faith? Not at all, since both affirm the possibility of temporary faith.⁷⁹ Goodwin is reacting against a tendency of Calvin’s emphasis, especially felt by those later generations, but he is not denying anything essential to Calvin’s doctrine. Goodwin does not deny that faith includes *fiducia*, he simply wants to comfort those who do not experience the full subjective benefit of this *fiducia* that such a subjective reflection is not necessary to the exercise of trust itself. “Now, I grant indeed that an act of trust, and confidence, and reliance is required to faith, it is that which I would rather call the act of particular application, as hereafter may be shewn.”⁸⁰

Again, Goodwin’s own remarks reflect the tension and confusion in the Puritan development of the doctrine of assurance. On one hand, true faith is distinguished from false faith in that in the former, one “is *persuaded* of Christ’s readiness to save sinners, with some secret intimation that there is mercy *for himself*, though a sinner” (emphasis added).⁸¹ Furthermore, the *sylogismus mysticus*, which for Goodwin cannot really be considered a syllogism, but a direct assurance spoken to the mind and heart, is itself related somehow to faith’s essence. In what one might today regard as the confidence of a radical empiricist, Goodwin declares,

Sense is never deceived about its proper object. Therefore if it be a spiritual sight and a spiritual sense, it hath a certainty joined with it. The knowledge of faith it is called assurance in Heb x 22, but in Col ii 2, as you do increase in it, you are said to 'increase in all riches of the full assurance of understanding'. It is such an assurance, and so rich, as you cannot have from your senses, or anything else. The apostle heaps up expressions, he calls it assurance, he calls it full assurance, and he calls it an acknowledgment, words enough, one would think, to make knowledge sure. But let me here add a caution too. My meaning is not that every saint that is a true believer hath an assurance that Jesus Christ is his, or that he hath the assurance of his own salvation. No, many believers have not that, neither is that essential to faith or to the act of application.⁸²

So here we have a direct spiritual sight (the direct act of faith) and the direct spiritual sense (the reflex act of faith) and such spiritual sight and sense have "a certainty" about them. But this is not enjoyed by every Christian and one ought not to be discouraged if such experience is not readily forthcoming. This, after all, is the "full assurance" given through the whispering of the Holy Spirit to the conscience. Such "full assurance" is not "essential to faith or to the act of application," but does Goodwin intend to suggest that there is absolutely no element of assurance (objectively considered) planted in the seed of faith?

Goodwin argues that, while the witness of the Spirit may not be sufficient "to quell all doubts and temptations" (something Calvin never attributed to assurance), the Spirit does come "to speak then as one that would work the heart into Jesus Christ, and carry on the heart to Jesus Christ" and it is "enough to carry on the heart" to Christ throughout one's life. One wonders how this faith, created and preserved by the Holy Spirit, is enough to carry one on to Christ and keep one trusting in Christ apart from some assurance objectively settled in one's mind. To be sure, the experience may be weak (and at times even non-existent, as Calvin also observed)⁸³ as faith itself may be weak, but there is enough certainty "to carry one on to Christ," if not to "quell all doubtings."⁸⁴

Goodwin's confusing development of this relation between faith and assurance is surely not clarified by the following remarks

But for the making a real union with him (so far as on our part it is made), it lies not primarily in believing Christ is mine, or that Christ is, but in joining myself to his person in the shooting in of my will into him, in taking him, and consenting to be his, to believe he is mine is indeed to apprehend that union, and to believe spiritually he draws in the heart to it, but to have my will drawn to him, to rest in him, to cleave to him as the fountain of life, Deut xxx 20, it is that makes the real union⁸⁵

Note that Goodwin directly contradicts himself in this paragraph, maintaining on one hand that this faith-union "lies not primarily in believing Christ is mine," for that would be assurance, and, on the other hand, it involves resting in him and cleaving to him as the fountain of life. In actual practice, this is precisely Calvin's doctrine. All the Genevan reformer wishes to say is that faith involves in its very essence a real resting and trusting in Christ that his work is sufficient for his or her salvation. If Goodwin is willing to go so far as to say, with Owen, that faith is "a *firm persuasion of heart* that God is a reconciled Father *unto us* in the Son of his love," there is no dogmatic shift even on this point. That is not to ignore the differences in emphasis and application, but the notion that the Puritans pushed the notion of persuasion and assurance (though not "full assurance") entirely out of the nature of faith cannot be clearly substantiated.

Passive or Active?

The next question in the debate over continuity is whether the Puritans shifted from Calvin's passive view of faith to an active view⁸⁶. Goodwin adopts the definition of Luther, who "calls this righteousness of faith a passive righteousness and faith a mere receiving grace"⁸⁷. Furthermore, just as in Calvin and Beza, repentance follows faith.⁸⁸ John 16:7-11 lays this out, Goodwin

observes The Holy Spirit will (1) convince of sin, (2) convince of righteousness (justification), and convince of judgment (sanctification) ⁸⁹

Goodwin, in fact, is so eager to emphasize the passive nature of justifying faith that he asserts, “Absolute submission God requires of no man, that is, that men should be content to be damned, or the like, but hypothetical submission in supposed cases is what God enableth, his servants to perform to him ” Although one may not reject Christ as Lord, “yet this choosing of Christ to be our King and Lord, and submitting to him accordingly, is not that act of faith which justifies a man ” To be sure,

if a traitor, having been a rebel against his prince, should come to him for his sovereign grace and favour, to pardon and forgive him, he comes to seek pardon of his prince, who may choose whether he will pardon him or no, and then certainly the very law of his coming to him for grace, requireth (and requireth it naturally, and it cannot be otherwise) that this man should come nakedly, and come upon his knees, and lay aside all his hostility, and his weapons which he hath used against him ⁹⁰

But repentance doesn't justify

It is not as if the soul when it comes to believe, and sees itself lost without Christ, &c , conclude, I must repent to perform a condition of my justification no, but the very nature of the thing doth it So that, I say, repentance and sanctification, take the acts of it, they are all seminally included in faith, and flow from it, if it be faith unfeigned, and without guile, if it be faith that resteth upon Christ for the blessedness of having our sins covered ⁹¹

But this is not, properly speaking, justifying faith Goodwin here, no doubt, has some of his own friends in mind (possibly the New England elders in the Antinomian controversy)

You have often heard it, and I find it in some discourses urged that faith is not only a believing on Christ, but a taking and a receiving of Christ, and that therein also lies the act of justifying, but I do not urge it so, for I take it, that the formal act of justification is when the soul resteth and believeth on the Lord Jesus, and the Scripture carries it so throughout Although thus to take Christ, and to receive Christ as a lord, and as a king, and a husband, and apply the soul accordingly to him, be not that formal act of faith as justifying, yet all such acts do flow from, and are contained in, the very nature of that act of faith that seeketh justification from Christ ⁹²

The Christian does come to embrace Christ as king, but usually first as priest. Trust in his lordship may not always be explicit in those who are truly justified and are, therefore, truly under his reign. God does not suspend justification until one submits to Christ's lordship.

Neither doth God so drive on this treaty about justification, that he should keep off and suspend to justify the soul coming to Christ for salvation, till the soul first doth distinctly apprehend that it must have his person before it can have his righteousness, and that he is to be to it a Lord and King, as well as a Saviour.

But as was said, this is in the very nature of the act, and though they come to Christ only for their justification, yet if it be a coming unto him in good earnest, they do, by that very act, take whole Christ, and all that is in him, and all that he is ordained to be to the soul. For as it is in marriage, though a woman marries one that is rich that all her debts may be paid, yet she marries him, and takes him as an husband, to all other ends and purposes else. and this is evident also by this, that these poor souls that come thus to Christ distinctly for justification, though they cannot say, I remember when I was married to Jesus Christ, I cannot remember when I took him as my Lord, and King, and Head, &c, under such distinct ideas, or that the treaty was so driven on, yet they do all to him that a wife should do to a husband, they seek to please him and content him, they do all to him as servants should do to a master.

No, but many a poor soul (it may be) comes to Jesus Christ first for his righteousness, and by coming to him for his righteousness, the truth is, he takes Jesus Christ himself.⁹³

Goodwin is satisfied that union with Christ is of such efficacy that "God need not insist on such things [repentance] as conditions," because although one is justified purely by trusting in Christ's imputed righteousness, this single act of faith brings every grace in its steady train.⁹⁴ "God delights in his own shewing mercy," says Goodwin, "more than in all our sacrifices, and he delights more in our knowing him to be merciful and to be gracious, which indeed is seen in our believing on him, than in all our obedience which we perform to him."⁹⁵ So, he is convinced that "a few thoughts of believing glorify Christ much more than a great deal of obedience. This will be found at the latter day."⁹⁶

This is why Goodwin's favorite image of faith is sight. "Now take the sense of seeing," he

explains, “and *fit intra mittendo, non extra mittendo*, it is done by receiving something in, not by sending anything out. The eye sees by receiving, by taking in the beams of the light, or by taking in the image of the colours from the object, irradiated by the light, and not by sending forth a light of itself, and so indeed is faith.” It is “a mere passive grace”⁹⁷

But once, more Goodwin is not an exceptional renegade among his fellows. In a sermon preached at Cambridge in 1625, none other than John Preston declared, “What is faith, but a laying hold of Christ? Now, the emptier the hand is, the further hold it takes: the more we are taken off ourselves, the further we shall cleave to Christ.”⁹⁸ But there is a difference between faith and assurance. If one is to believe, it is a matter of pure passive reception, but assurance is attained by active seeking.

If thou art so far convinced in thy judgement of thy sin and misery, and inability to help thyself, as that it hath turned the bent and rudder of thy will, so that thou sayest, I will go and humble myself to my Father, change my course, confess and forsake my sins, thou hast good evidence that thou art in a state of grace. When, therefore, thou findest these effects, thou mayest be sure of thy safety.⁹⁹

Notice, he is not saying that when “thou findest these effects, thou mayest have safety,” but “thou mayest be sure of thy safety.” It is evidence of being in a state of grace, not conditions to being in such a state, and this is why it is vital to always interpret the Puritans according to their own distinction between faith and assurance. “Though thy affections be not so stirred, consider the promises as made one’s coming in, and taking Christ, and believing in him, they are not made to the commotion of the affections.”¹⁰⁰ One wonders how “passive” faith must be viewed in order for it not to be a work. For Michael Jinkins, for instance, the epithet of voluntarism and activism may be applied even to the belief that faith is “a reaching forth or a laying hold of Christ and his

benefits”¹⁰¹

It is always dangerous to impose contemporary distinctions on historical movements, and yet that is what is often done with the Puritans, who, as we have seen, were not lacking their own wardrobe of distinctions. One example of this problem of anachronism is the distinction between passive and active faith. R. T. Kendall, for instance, argues that in contrast to the Puritans, “What stands out in [Calvin’s] descriptions is the given, intellectual, passive, and assuring nature of faith. What is absent is a need for gathering faith, voluntarism, faith as man’s act, and faith that must await experimental knowledge to verify its presence. Faith is ‘something merely passive, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God’s favour but receiving from Christ that which we lack’”¹⁰². But this suggestion assumes that there was, in fact, a debate over a passive and active view of faith between Calvin and his successors, which is nevertheless unknown to us. Second, it assumes that the reformers’ exclusion of the principle of works from the exercise of saving faith included a rejection of any definition of faith that made it *in esse* active. Third, it assumes that the Puritans included such an active view of faith precisely to widen the definition to include obedience. Each of these assumptions requires some interaction.

1. On the first assumption, we must distinguish between the passive subject (the sinner, prior to initial conversion) and the allegedly passive act of faith. As we have seen, the Puritans are in perfect agreement with reformers with regard to monergism.¹⁰³ But to say that the sinner, once awakened by God’s grace alone, does not personally exercise saving faith is precisely the denial of nature that became so prominent in the New England antinomian controversy. Proponents of discontinuity fail to make this distinction, so that references to human activity in the exercise of faith are taken as some form of works-righteousness.

2 On the second assumption, what would one make of Luther's famous declaration concerning faith "Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith"¹⁰⁴ Would Luther, too, be considered a legalist who sought to turn faith into an active enterprise in order to admit the principle of works into the definition? Surely there is nothing about *activity* in and of itself that requires a principle of *merit*. Paul Helm observes that Kendall's chief citation from Calvin is actually misquoted. Where Kendall's citation reads, "Faith is 'something merely passive,,'" the full quote actually states, "For, *as regards justification*, faith is something merely passive, " (emphasis Helm's)¹⁰⁵ The omission is crucial, since Calvin was not saying that faith was inactive. What is the proper activity of faith in justification (reception) is different from its proper activity in sanctification (good works). To say that faith is active, and immediately setting out to worship, serve, and obey God, is not to say that these *effects* of faith are the *conditions* or even part of the *definition* of faith. In justification, Goodwin insists along with his Puritan colleagues, faith is active in looking to Christ. Is trust a passive thing? Is one necessarily returning the faithful to a covenant of works if one says that faith is a matter of actively clinging to the promises made by God, achieved through the person and work of Jesus Christ, and applied by the power of the Holy Spirit? The question is not whether faith is active, but (a) what it is doing in this activity (trusting or earning), and (b) what it is directed toward in this activity. Perhaps Kendall adopts a different understanding of "passive" and "active" than is commonly employed, but it is not the activity of faith that causes problems for a Protestant view, rather, it is the matter of the object and sufficiency of faith that is of concern.

3 In order for Kendall's thesis to stand, the Puritans must be seen to have promulgated this

active view of faith in order to introduce an element of obedience into the definition of saving faith. So, while we are clearly not justified by faith and works (no Calvinist would have survived the protest of his colleagues in making such an assertion), the faith by which one is solely justified is no longer simple knowledge, assent, and trust, but knowledge, assent, trust, and obedience. The problem with this point in the thesis is that this simply is not in line with the sources. Goodwin wrote, "And indeed, if we would define faith, what is it but the power of God drawing the heart to Christ, and holding it to him?"¹⁰⁶ We have already seen above how representative this statement was of the Spiritual Brotherhood. One might even argue that Goodwin here goes farther than Calvin would have wanted to go. This is so "passive" that it does not even include the idea that it is, after all, a human being who is exercising it. It is beyond a God-granted act on the part of humans, God himself is the only operating party in the exercise of faith. Now, of course, Goodwin does not really take it that far, as we have seen in other descriptions he offers of faith, nevertheless, it does make the point that, like Calvin himself, subsequent Reformed divines were comfortable saying, on the one hand, that faith itself is active and, on the other hand, that it is not active in anything pertaining unto justification besides believing (that is, receiving)¹⁰⁷

As far as bringing the principle of obedience under the definition of faith itself, this is simply not allowed by Goodwin, as in his insistence that even submission to Christ as Lord is not justifying faith.¹⁰⁸ And, as we have seen already, Owen concurs, against those who, concerning the definition of faith, insist "that obedience is included in it," naming Socinus and others who "make obedience to be the essential form of faith." Others still deny that it is part of faith's essence, but argue that "only a sincere active purpose of obedience" is required. To be sure, genuine faith is never present without works, but in the matter of justification, the works are never at any point included as either a meritorious or even non-meritorious instrumental cause of justification.¹⁰⁹

Owen will not even allow repentance to share a place with faith when it touches on justification “Faith alone is required unto our justification”¹¹⁰ and that faith itself is merely a “receptive instrument”¹¹¹ It does not look for things to achieve, when touching justification, but rests in the work completed by Christ and maintained by him in his heavenly intercession But saving faith not only justifies, it too is the energetic principle in sanctification and in this sense the same faith that secured justification apart from works immediately begins to work¹¹²

It cannot be denied that the emphasis one finds in many Puritans on gathering evidences is alien to Calvin, but the principle is not denied by him, so long as it does not become the primary foundation for assurance and serves to comfort in an *a posteriori* rather than *a priori* manner As Calvin does not deny the principle of a practical syllogism, neither do Goodwin or the other high Calvinists deny the principle of distinguishing this evidence-gathering from the “faith of recumbancy” or the “direct act” of faith It is certainly not the way Calvin put it, but it is thoroughly consistent with his system. A further distinction among the Puritans was between temporary and persevering faith, but we shall consider this under the discussion of assurance and perseverance

Conclusion

It seems that for one who believes that assurance is of the essence of faith, the practical syllogism must necessarily be a covenant of works Only if one accepts a distinction between saving faith (direct act) and assurance (reflex act) can the practical syllogism be conceived as arriving at the *realization* by works of that which one actually *possesses* by faith alone But if faith is assurance, then arriving at assurance by obedience is synonymous with arriving at faith (and

therefore justification) by obedience. Nevertheless, the Puritans avoided just that problem, by clearly distinguishing faith, which gives no place to evidences of grace, and assurance, which discerns the reality of the faith by its effects. Calvin avoided it by making faith and assurance synonymous, and therefore rejecting the possibility of works serving as a *foundation* or *a priori* predicate for assurance. Thus, both avoided the same danger of legalism, one by stressing the distinction between faith and assurance, and the other by stressing their link and therefore rejecting the priority of a *sylogismus practicus*.

As we summarize the continuity between Calvin and the Puritans, especially Goodwin, on assurance and the essence of faith, we must direct our attention briefly to the basic objections of the discontinuity thesis on this point. Kendall concludes that the major departures from Calvin, shared by Beza, the Heidelberg theologians, the Dutch, and the Puritans include (1) the demise of faith as persuasion, (2) separation of faith and assurance due to their seeing faith as an act of the will, (3) the need for two acts of faith—direct and reflex, (4) assurance via the practical syllogism.¹¹³

First, the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of the Synod of Dordt are agreed on the following points: (a) faith as persuasion. According to Heidelberg,

True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in His Word is true, it is also *a deep-rooted assurance*, created in me by the Holy Spirit *through the gospel* that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, *not only others, but I too*, have had *my sins forgiven*, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation” (emphasis added),¹¹⁴

and we have already seen Ursinus’ remark above, that the believer is assured of election by faith in Christ, (b) the Heidelberg and Dutch divines regard assurance as part of faith’s essence,¹¹⁵ (c) they follow Calvin in allowing the practical syllogism in an *a posteriori* affirmation of assurance, but refusing to allow it in attaining assurance (i.e., faith).¹¹⁶ Indeed, even Martin Luther allowed

for “the confirmation of faith in Christ by the testimony of a good conscience, both before the world and before God,” observes Randall Zachman ¹¹⁷ “Even though the testimony of the good conscience cannot be the foundation of our confidence *coram Deo*, Luther insists that it is a necessary and important confirmation of our faith in the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”¹¹⁸ Zachman concludes that, “this claim creates an unavoidable dilemma for Luther in order to be assured of our salvation, we must not only have faith in the grace of God in Jesus Christ, but we must *know* that we have genuine faith in the grace of God,”¹¹⁹ and the testimony of a good conscience is necessary for this latter act which the Puritans called the “reflex act”

Furthermore, the Heidelberg divines (especially Ursinus and Olevianus) do not seem to have a different agenda from the reformers’ when they ask, “Where does this faith come from?” Answer “The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel and confirms it through our use of the holy sacraments”¹²⁰ Noticeably absent is an emphasis on preparation or the syllogism, but even when we use good works in part to comfort us in our assurance, “so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,”¹²¹ this is still not inconsistent with Calvin, whose only problem with the syllogism was its use in establishing the foundation of assurance. It is instructive that both this syllogism and the doctrine of repentance are covered in a distinctly different section than faith and justification, the latter under the discussion of “Grace,” and the former under “Gratitude.” At this point, too, it is important to note that when Kendall asserts that the Puritans reversed Calvin’s order of faith and repentance, he seems unaware of the two distinct categories of repentance that were at the heart of the Puritan view—legal and evangelical repentance.¹²² By the preaching of the Law, sinners were brought to despair of their own righteousness. Legal repentance, therefore, precedes faith.¹²³ But, as Helm states, “Evangelical repentance accompanies and arises from faith”¹²⁴ If Kendall had recognized this distinction, he could not have understood the repentance that precedes faith as *evangelical* repentance. It is this confusion that leads him to

conclude that a “crypto-Arminian doctrine of faith” dominates Puritan theology ¹²⁵

As further evidence that Kendall has not grasped the continuity between Calvin and his successors among the Reformed scholastics on the Continent, the Belgic Confession insists that “leaning and resting on the sole obedience of Christ crucified, which is ours when we believe in Him,” is “enough to cover all our sins and to make us confident, freeing the conscience from the fear, dread, and terror of God’s approach. In fact, if we had to appear before God relying--no matter how little--on ourselves or some other creature, then, alas, we would be swallowed up” ¹²⁶ “Moreover, although we do good works, we do not base our salvation on them, for we cannot do any work that is not defiled by our flesh and also worthy of punishment. And even if we could point to one, memory of a single sin is enough for God to reject that work. So we would always be in doubt, tossed back and forth, without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be tormented constantly if they did not rest on the merit of the suffering and death of our Savior” ¹²⁷ It must be remembered that the Belgic Confession was officially adopted by the Synod of Dordt in 1619. So the evidence leaves us with a trail of continuity on faith and assurance from Calvin to Dordt. While it is true that Westminster differs from the Continental tradition at this point, ¹²⁸ there can simply be no justification for viewing the Puritans as heirs of a shift from Calvin to Beza, mediated by the Heidelberg and Dutch theologians, along with their own William Perkins ¹²⁹ Even the Puritans themselves, as we have seen, present a variety on these matters, especially when one compares the earlier Puritans to the later ones. But if Goodwin is to be classed a “high Calvinist,” then this gradual change from assurance as part of faith’s essence to a distinct act surely cannot be considered a drift toward Arminianism. It is Goodwin, more than most, who emphasized faith as a mere receiving and who even refused to consider faith a “condition” of justification, as we shall explore below.

As to the first point, Goodwin clearly affirmed, with Owen, in their joint-statement on the subject, that faith is “the heart’s persuasion” of God’s saving promises “unto us,” which immediately joins assurance and faith in at least a seminal form, against Kendall’s second point. On the third point, Kendall argues that the Puritan view parallels that of Arminius, and perhaps even that of Bellarmine.¹³⁰ After all, did Arminius not offer two separate acts of faith? But here again, it must be recognized that the Puritans were not saying that there were two separate acts of receiving Christ, but that there was one act of receiving Christ and another act of reflecting on that fact. This is a far cry from Arminius’ view of two separate acts.

There is significant variety among the Puritans in their applications of Reformed theology to particular pastoral problems, reminding us that Puritanism was itself a movement in transition and development. Working out Calvin’s trinitarian, implicitly covenantal system meant that there would be progress and this would, of course, mean that Calvin’s heirs would be saying things that Calvin himself did not actually articulate in the same manner. This should not immediately lead us to conclude that shifts have taken place, but rather should be expected in the process of systematic reflection within a tradition that seeks to maintain a continuity with Calvin and, indeed, with the whole classical Christian tradition, including the early fathers. It is not faith in its essence that most interested Thomas Goodwin, however, but, like Owen, his pleasure was watching faith in action, particularly as it cleaved to Christ. That leads us into the discussion of the relationship of faith and assurance to justification.

Notes to Chapter Four

1 Calvin, *Institutes* 3.1.1

2 Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, *op cit* 1. “The doctrine of the mediator is the foundation, and substance, of the doctrine of the church,” p. 91

3 Calvin, *Institutes* 3.2.2-7, cf Ursinus, *op cit*, pp. 108-110

4 Calvin, *ibid*

5 Ames, *Marrow*, p 159 “The act of faith depends partly upon an inborn principle or attitude toward grace and partly upon the action of God moving before and stirring up” It must be born in mind that the Arminian controversy provided the backdrop for such discussions and the aim of such comments was to guard divine monergism, so that faith would be seen as having its origins in God’s grace alone This change in disposition is entirely divine, with no human cooperation, in fact, the individual is merely passive in this “first conversion” Thus, Kendall’s suggestion (pp 63-65, *op cit*) that Arminius would later seize upon Beza’s distinction between a “first conversion” in which man is entirely passive and a “second conversion” in which he cooperates with grace fails to recognize that Beza was simply using “second conversion” as synonymous with sanctification Passive in the new birth, man is nevertheless active in his progressive renewal This is the doctrine of the reformers, not of Arminius In fact, an objection to human activity in sanctification is a distinctly antinomian doctrine

6 See Calvin’s discussion of the medieval scholastic formula of “formed” and “unformed” faith in 3 2 8 (*Institutes*)

7 Goodwin, 8 306-7

8 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 2 1-10

9 7 483

10 *ibid*

11 6 452

12 6 455

13 So much of R T Kendall’s thesis depends on the assertion that Calvin represented faith as merely “intellectual, passive, and assuring” (p 19) He argues that for Calvin, faith is located in the understanding While it is true that Calvin places much emphasis on the intellectual aspect of faith, he also writes that faith “is more of the heart than of the brain, and more of the disposition than of the understanding” (3 2 8) Elsewhere, he underscores the centrality of the heart (3 2 33,36) Just as Calvin cannot be reduced to a simple, categorical representation, neither can the Puritans As von Rohr observes, Downname wrote that faith is a “perswasion of the minde”, Perkins observed, “The place and seat of faith is the minde of man, not the will for it stands in a kinde of particular knowledge or perswasion, and there is no perswasion but in the minde” (pp 68-69, *op cit*) Nevertheless, Ames goes to great lengths to emphasize the will, apparently with little sense of radical departure from his mentor or from the wider Reformed tradition that continued to regard him as a leading spokesman Further, Beza cannot be made into the culprit as easily as the “discontinuity” thesis seems to make him Cf Robert Letham, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, “Theodore Beza A Reassessment,” vol 40, 1987 “Beza writes of faith as located in the heart (*cor*), the mind (*mens*), the soul (*animus*), as well as in the will (*voluntas*) Moreover, Beza also follows Calvin in placing faith before repentance,” and Letham offers the primary documentation for each case In fact, Beza denies “that correction of life is the road to Christ Neither do we come to Christ because we have corrected our life but, on the contrary, because Christ first loved us and comes to us and is in us and we in him so we advance daily in amending our life” (p 37)

14 Goodwin, 8 504

15 8 308

16 *ibid*

17 4 262

18 4 264

19 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 33-36

20 *ibid*, 3 2 33

21 Goodwin, 4 264 It is worth speculating that the same modern interest in discovering a “central dogma” is responsible for the demand for locating the seat of faith primarily in one

faculty, almost to the exclusion of others. Such a strict requirement on the material is ill-equipped to accommodate variety among authors within the same tradition or, indeed, variety within the writings of the same author.

22 Goodwin, 8 258 and 4 335

23 4 239

24 Owen, 5 93

25 *ibid*

26 *ibid*, pp 101-2

27 *ibid*, p 103

28 *ibid*, p 107

29 Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 80

30 Compare the Savoy Greater Catechism, Question 2, and the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 18, 1-2

31 Goodwin, 4 235

32 Owen, 1 486n

33 Goodwin, 8 345. This, by the way, distinguishes Goodwin from the antinomians, who held that union precedes faith.

34 Kendall, *op cit*, p 200 ff

35 Cf Trinterud, *op cit*

36 Ursinus, *Commentary*, pp 108 ff

37 Tyndale, *Introduction Unto The Pistle To The Romayns*, (a x) unpub. ms. in The Bodleian Library, Oxford University. Tyndale, in his *Introduction Unto The Pistle To The Romayns* (folio, Bodleian Library), emphasizes the Augustinian notion of the Law as something that requires inward, not merely outward, obedience. We cannot do this, he says, unless we are given a new heart. Hence, one does not find here Luther's insistence on the priority of the didactic use. There is no question that the accent in Tyndale falls on sanctification and the new obedience rather than on the theme of imputation or *simul iustus et peccator*. Nevertheless, he does make it clear that no one shall be justified by the works of the Law.

Here by perceivest thou that those sophisters are but disceavers which teach that a man may and must prepare hymselfe to grace and to the favoure of God with good workes. Howe can they prepare them sylves un to the favoure off God and to that which is good which them silves can doo no good. Hereof cometh it that fayth only iustifyeth, maketh rightewes, and fulfilleth the lawe, for it bringeth the Spire thorowe Christes deservynges, the Spire bringeth lust (love), looseth the hert, maketh hym fre, setteth hym at lyberte, and geveth hym strengthe to worke the dedes of the lawe with love, even as the lawe requireth. (a iii -v)

But notice in this that the reason justification *sola fide* is effective is that the merit of Christ brings the Spirit, the Spirit brings love, regenerates, and gives the believer the strength to obey the Law. In Tyndale we see a strict Augustinianism, but the stress on the objective work of Christ is somewhat overshadowed by the subjective work of the Holy Spirit. "Gods favoure is so grette and so strange over us that we are counted for full, whole and perfecte before God." But is this great and strange favor of God over us due to the "marvelous exchange"? Not entirely.

For Gods favoure to us ward devydeh not hyr silf, encreasyunge a lytell and a lytell, as doo the gyftes, but receaveth us whole and altogedder in full love for Christes sake our intercessor and mediator. (a viii)

Although the believer is never perfect in this life, he or she will not be condemned, but is that because of the imputation of Christ's righteousness? Rather, it is "because of the Spire and because of the gyftes of the Spire as begonne in us." Referring to Paul's use of Abraham in Romans four, Tyndale declared that before he had done any works the patriarch was "iustified allredy before God inwardly in the hert." (emphasis added)(b ii). When discussing the difference between the Law and the Gospel, and concluding that the Law condemns and the Gospel promises,

the question arises, “What does the Gospel promise?” Tyndale’s replies that it is that God “wyl geve hym the Sprite and streyngh both to love the will of God and to worke thereafter” (b ii) In short, the Law shows us our helplessness, the Gospel offers us God’s help Missing is the priority of grace as forgiveness and acceptance of the sinner as sinner While Calvin and the Reformed tradition in general gave large place to the benefits of Christ’s work in the purchase of the gifts of the Spirit, to renew the imago Dei, the forensic element is foremost Nevertheless, Tyndale does link divine acceptance to faith In spite of our sin, God “will not counte it as synne, but wylle deale with us accordynge to our belefe in Christe, accordynge to his promises which he hath sworne to us untill the synne be full slayne and mortified by death” (a viii) Faith, for Tyndale, is entirely wrought by God and is

a lively and stedfaste truste i the favoure of God where with we committe oure selves all to gedyr un to God, and that truste is so surely grounded and standeth so fast in our hertes that a man wolde not once doute of it, though he shulde dye a thousand tymes therefore (a x)

38 William Bradford, *Works*, volume 1, *op cit*, pp 344-345

39 John Downname, *Christian Warfare*, The Bodleian Library, Oxford University, p 204

40 Cited in Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p 31-2

41 Cited in D B Knox, *The Doctrine of Justification By Faith in the English Reformers* (D Phil unpub, 1972), p 113, from Frith’s “Preparation to the Cross”

42 *ibid*, p 114

43 The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 18, Sections 1-4

44 Perkins, *Works*, *op cit*, I 156,158

45 Breward ed of Perkins, *Works*, *op cit*, p 368

46 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 7, 15-16

47 *ibid*, 3 2 17

48 *ibid*

49 Tony Lane, *op cit*, p 103

50 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 17

51 Goodwin, 8 309

52 Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p 75

53 Bishop James Ussher, *A Body of Divinity, or The Summe and Substance of Christian Religion, Catechetically expounded, and explained, by way of Questions and Answers, etc*, 3rd edition (London M F, 1663), pp 197-200

54 Goodwin, 7 186

55 6 23

56 4 239

57 Owen, 11 84

58 *ibid*

59 *ibid*

60 Calvin 3 14 5, 19

61 Calvin, in *Synoptic Gospels*, II 325 “Our faith is never perfect, we are partly unbelievers” Also, in the *Institutes*, he observes, “Some portion of unbelief is always mixed with faith in every Christian” (3 2 4)

62 Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth*, (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1982 reprint), p 14

63 See William Perkins, *The Workes of Mr William Perkins* (London John Legatt, 1631), volume 1, pp 115, 629, 18, 287, 367, 606

64 Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 112

65 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 63

66 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 7

67 Cf Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 174

- 68 *ibid*
- 69 John Dod's *Ten Commandments*, p 10
- 70 In fact, in arguing that assurance does not always belong to every believer, Goodwin explains, "By prevailing assurance, I mean such an assurance as overpowereth doubts and sense to the contrary " (8 338)
- 71 Cited in D B Knox, *op cit*, p 105
- 72 Goodwin, 7 254
- 73 4 15
- 74 6 58-9, cf p 143
- 75 Joel Beeke, in *The Assurance of Faith, op cit*, notes that "the Independent who was most influenced by the Sibbes-Preston tradition" was Thomas Goodwin, p 257
- 76 Sibbes, 5 391
- 77 Goodwin, 8 212-13
- 78 8 215
- 79 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 11-12
- 80 Goodwin, 8 277
- 81 8 258
- 82 8 265
- 83 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 17-20
- 84 Goodwin, 8 271 Also on p 271 "So the soul, when it hath wound Jesus Christ, as we may so speak, this hint, this whisper is enough to carry on to Christ, so as never to leave him, and that with some encouragement, though it doth not rise up to assurance, and prevail over doubtings I distinguish it thus assurance is when the Spirit of God so speaks to a man that he speaks as a witness, when he comes in and evidenceth to a man the truth of his estate, and that Jesus Christ is his, and when he speaks as a witness he will speak so loud as to prevail over all temptations, and over all doubts, or else he will lose his end, for a witness must so speak as to put the thing out of doubt, or else he is no witness But now in this secret whisper of faith he doth not so, he doth not come then to speak as a witness, but he comes to speak then as one that would work the heart into Jesus Christ, and carry on the heart to Jesus Christ, and in this case a secret whisper, which he himself doth really back, is enough to carry on the heart, though it is not enough to quell all doubts and temptations" (p 271)
- 85 Goodwin, 4 273
- 86 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 19
- 87 Goodwin, 4 385
- 88 4 359
- 89 4 361
- 90 8 316-18
- 91 8 320-1
- 92 *ibid*
- 93 8 323-4
- 94 327
- 95 8 466
- 96 8 476
- 97 8 467
- 98 John Preston, *A Golden Sceptre* (Ligonier, PA Soli Deo Gloria, 1990), p 90
- 99 *ibid*, p 103-4
- 100 *ibid*
- 101 Michael Jinkins, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol 43, pp 321-349, "John Cotton and the

Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638 A Profile of Experiential Individualism in American Puritanism” *op cit*, p 342 Furthermore, the union with Christ of which Calvin speaks looks curiously like the Irenaean interpretation at the hands of Jinkins “Calvin’s understanding of sanctification as that which, primarily, was accomplished once for all in Christ on behalf of humanity, was lost, in fact, to Puritan orthodoxy For Calvin, Christ entered into human flesh in order to sanctify humanity, offering in himself the sanctified human creature to God, and turning to humankind to present to it participation in his sanctified humanity ‘This,’ wrote Calvin, ‘is the meaning of Christ’s statement “For their sake I sanctify myself” [John 17 19]” (p 344) This is not Calvin’s view, but that of the Eastern Church, which Torrance (whose influence is noted by the author) and other writers of the discontinuity thesis seem to wish to impose on the reformer Calvin went on in that same exposition of John 17 19 to add that this involved imputation as well as sanctification, related it to the believer rather than to a recapitulated humanity, and, without even referring to the incarnation, states, “Although this sanctification belongs to the whole life of Christ, it shone brightest in the sacrifice of his death ” Furthermore, Calvin’s “definitive sanctification” was not recapitulation, which he makes clear in his attacks against Osiander’s ontological view of justification He views it as the believer’s sharing in the imputed holiness of Christ through union with him This is precisely what the Puritans called “definitive sanctification ”

102 Kendall, *op cit*, p 19

103 The Westminster Confession of Faith “This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it,” (Ch 10, Section 2)

104 Martin Luther, Preface to Romans (Grand Rapids Kregel, 1979)

105 Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, *op cit*, p 53

106 Goodwin, 6 452

107 The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 14

108 Goodwin, 8 323

109 *ibid*

110 Owen, 5 103

111 *ibid*, pp 98-99

112 The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 14, Section 2

113 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 200 ff

114 The Heidelberg Catechism, *op cit*, “Lord’s Day 7, Q 21”

115 Ursinus, in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, *op cit*, states that the exercise of saving faith includes the assurance that one “sees, embraces, and applies particularly, to himself, the promise of grace,(p 111)

116 Ursinus, *ibid* “No man can indeed know, or judge with certainty, from second causes, or from events whether good or evil, for the external condition furnishes no safe criterion either of the favor or disapprobation of God,” (p 115)

117 Randall Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith* (Philadelphia Fortress, 1993), p 71

118 *ibid*

119 *ibid*

120 The Heidelberg Catechism, *op cit*, “Lord’s Day 25, Question 65”

121 *ibid*, “Lord’s Day 32, Question 86”

122 Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, *op cit*, p 65

123 *ibid*

124 *ibid*

125 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 208

126 The Belgic Confession, *Ecumenical Creeds and Confessions* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church Publications, 1987), Article 23

127 *ibid*, Article 24

128 The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 18

129 This is Kendall's contention, *op cit*, pp 210 ff

130 R T Kendall, *op cit*, pp 4 ff

Chapter Five

The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith

As we have seen, Goodwin's objective emphasis on "Christ set forth" is the axis around which his understanding of assurance turns. It will be the purpose of this chapter to focus on Goodwin's understanding of the cardinal evangelical doctrine, justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. Whatever his distinctions between faith and assurance may have entailed, did Goodwin's central attention to justification provide a sufficient object for faith and its reflex act of assurance? Representative of the general tradition, Goodwin would rather explain faith in relation to its object and acts than in terms of its essence. If Goodwin acknowledges a central motif or organizing principle, union with Christ obtains just that significance and justification is the heart of that presentation.¹ It is as if everything he has said before has been anticipating and struggling earnestly toward it, and everything after it is related to it in some manner. The following corresponds to Goodwin's outline, as he divides his discussion of justification into faith's object and its acts.

Part One The Object of Justifying Faith

God's Merciful Nature

Goodwin begins his discussion of justification by relating it to general revelation. While God is partially revealed in nature, the Gospel is not and "the way of faith, and of being saved by Christ, is a new way, whereof there are no footsteps in nature, neither corrupt nature nor pure

nature ” After the fall, whatever revelation from God that might be obtained, “nature will ever return to itself and its own ways ”² Reminiscent of Luther and Calvin, Goodwin insists that God’s very presence is a burden, not an announcement of peace or hope, because the conscience sees God as a judge More will be said about this below, nevertheless, suffice it to say here that because of this fallen condition, natural revelation is insufficient in providing an object for justifying faith We must know something more about God than nature conveys, since the revelation of divine mercy in Christ is found only in the Gospel Hence, Goodwin begins with the divine nature, not his nature in general, but specifically, his nature as it is disposed toward mercy ³

Because faith is difficult, “the consideration of the mercies in God’s heart and nature is the strongest, the most winning and obliging” of all of the divine attributes ⁴ This consideration, of course, follows the conviction that one is a sinner in need of mercy The Puritans call this “humiliation,” but it is simply what Luther and Calvin meant by the pedagogical use of the law, as Goodwin points out ⁵ There must be no confidence in oneself, but full recourse made to the God whose nature is merciful However, Goodwin is not even content to allow faith’s gaze to rest upon an abstract attribute of mercy in God, but takes it yet a step further “And God hath minted his mercies forth from out of his purposes into promises where they lie exposed, and to be given forth to every one that will come in for grace, and take them from mercy’s hands, even ‘redemption from all iniquity,’ ”⁶ Claiming the promises of God’s mercy is not presumption, but faith ⁷

God’s Merciful Will

Far from moving the seat of faith from the intellect and trust to the will and assent, Goodwin recognizes that the devils’ faith “doth no way capacitate them to lay upon them [the promises] for pardon ”⁸ Adam and Eve had no reason for hope but a promise God’s nature as merciful was not

in question for Adam and Eve any more than for the devil and his minions, the real question is, Do I have reason to personally hope in that mercy? And because God has expressed his merciful nature in his merciful will, through a merciful promise, faith has reason to hope in God's mercy,

thereby it comes to pass, that not any one can say, I am debarred or excluded. And hence a wide door for hope and faith stands open, for any one to come in at. The product or issue of all which is, that the revelation of the mercies of his nature, thus joined with the declarations of his gracious willingness to shew mercy to us men, is now become a just and meet ground and object for a sinner's faith.⁹

Notice that Goodwin's "Calvinism" no more restricts his free offer of the Gospel than it restricted Calvin's. To exercise faith in God's nature is insufficient, because the devils will not receive mercy in spite of God's merciful nature. Therefore, we need more than a revelation of God as merciful. We must know of his merciful will, not merely of his merciful nature.¹⁰ The universal offer and promise provides a sufficient base for one to trust in Christ directly.¹¹

Therefore, we must turn to special revelation, and not merely to special revelation in general, but to the free offer of the Gospel in particular, where God's mercy is, to use the divine's phrase, "minted forth into promises."¹² The Gospel of salvation by Christ, through grace alone, is taught in both testaments. "This proclamation of grace being a magna charta of the Old Testament."¹³ Even the very name "Jehovah," Goodwin writes, proclaims the mercy of God. It is that name that seals the covenant of grace to Israel in Egypt.¹⁴ Furthermore, he is revealed as the only one who can pardon us, as only he has that much mercy.¹⁵ and he is free to show or withhold mercy. Again, Goodwin's motivation for being rigorously exegetical (even to the point of extrapolating the divine name) is that he wishes to concentrate on God's salvific mercy, not to probe into his essence.¹⁶

Next, Goodwin combs the Scriptures for references to other divine attributes and discovers, for instance, that even the title “Alpha and Omega”

is spoken in relation unto grace and salvation. Thus it is in his loving us, and thus it is in his saving us, he is the first and last in both. It is not as the Papists say, who acknowledge God to be the first in the benefits of salvation, as that at the first mercy doth all in justification (and they call it therefore the first justification), which they ascribe to God’s grace wholly, but then they feign a second justification, as that which saves us, and makes us heirs of eternal life through the merits of works. Oh, but Jehovah merciful and gracious is the first and the last, and all and everything of grace depends upon him, and it is wholly grace and mercy from first to last.¹⁷

Because God is merciful from first to last, one should come to him in faith even when--and especially when, one has sinned

‘Trust in him at all times,’ for he that was, and is to come, is your Jehovah merciful. The worst times are those when you have sinned against him, yet come to him with faith at such time. You are not to imagine that indeed when we have walked holily, and only then, we may come with expectation of mercy and pardon from him. No, but trust in him ‘at all times,’ only come humbling yourselves, and turning unto him, draw near to him and he will draw near to you. God is not as man, to be merciful by fits, when the good humour comes on him.¹⁸

Even the rainbow reminds us of the immutability of the divine promise of mercy. Israel itself was kept by God’s faithfulness, not its own.¹⁹ Once again, Goodwin insists upon a trinitarian scheme for appreciating this divine attribute, soteriologically considered. “The Father had the decreeing part of all mercy, the Son the purchasing part, and the Holy Ghost the operative part, which requires power and strength.”²⁰ This power and strength is necessary, because mercy without power is pitiful, but not helpful.²¹ In his saving mercy, God not only has the nature and will to save, he has the power to save to the end, and this sovereignty, far from challenging God’s

goodness, is indispensable to its achieving the divine ambition to save. To simply say that, “God is love,” or “God is mercy,” is not enough. Goodwin states,

He presents himself to sinners, and if to them he had said at first dash, God is good, or God is gracious, or God is love, sinners would have said, This speaks short to us, and why? Because he is good to all his creatures that never sinned, ay, but merciful, with that proper effect, ‘pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin,’ that is a welcome saying to sinners, and speaks home to their case.²²

God is so merciful, at least in part, because he is self-sufficient and impassible, perfect in his attributes and blissful existence.²³ Thus, grace and mercy are the glory of the divine essence. Mercy is God’s disposition, resolution, and action. There are, Goodwin says, three aspects to this disposition in God. First, “There is the root or dunamis of mercifulness in God himself, the efficient cause ‘for thou art a gracious and merciful God,’ 2 there is the effects of that mercy ‘thou therefore forsookest them not,’ and 3 there is the same mercy in his nature, and set out as the final cause moving him thereunto ‘for thy great mercy’s sake.’”²⁴ Here again we see that the Scriptures are not violated by scholastic categories. Just as the reformers, despite their criticism of the “sophistry” of the Roman scholastics, nevertheless employed Aristotelian categories whenever helpful, the Puritans were content to speak of “efficient cause,” “final cause,” and the like, so long as such distinctions did seem to better explain the passage. In short, Goodwin says, “Mercy is but goodness with a ‘nevertheless,’ that is, though they are sinners, as Neh ix 31.”²⁵

Finally, Goodwin tackles objections to preferring divine mercy. Some will say that mercy is arbitrary in God, to which Goodwin replies that divine action depends on the divine nature and that nature is mercy.²⁶ Others will assert that mercy is a sign of weakness, but Goodwin argues

that God's display of mercy is his crowning glory²⁷ If mercy is God's chief attribute, forgiveness is mercy's chief expression Therefore, Goodwin concludes,

Let us therefore now consider if that the view of the sight and light of the mercies of God's nature let into the soul, and shining upon the promises of mercy, like as the light upon colours, do not superadd a lustre and life upon them, and impregnate them, as the sun doth the plants, and all things below that have either life, spirit, or virtue in them²⁸

In this description of God's forgiving mercy as the object, Goodwin sees faith primarily as persuasion, which is consistent with his general comments on the subject, as we discovered in our discussion of his doctrine of faith Further, Goodwin reaffirms the traditional definition of faith knowledge, assent, trust²⁹ God's mercy moves him to forgiveness and forgiving mercy moves us to faith³⁰ "We cannot want the knowledge of any of his attributes, but our faith will be the weaker for it," so knowledge is an indispensable part of faith Faith is a gift mercy not only promises, but performs Unlike his other attributes, which are "to himself and for himself," mercy is the attribute which has no other use "but to be given all forth unto sinners for his glory"³¹

God As Revealed in Christ

It is as if Goodwin sees the object of faith in terms of concentric circles The outside ring is God as he is merciful naturally The next ring inside is God as he is considered as having a merciful will towards us Now we come to the third circle God as revealed in Christ We must not believe in God abstractly considered, but rather, "under the apprehension of his person, Son of God and God-man (which properly is called his person), not God simply in his divine nature singly considered, but God manifest in flesh, or the Son of God made flesh"³² Since no one has seen God but the Son, we must look to the Son as the reliable expression of the Father's merciful nature and will

In Puritan fashion, Goodwin encourages his readers to move beyond speculation and propositional truths concerning Christ the Mediator “You all know and profess, as touching his person, that he is God, Son of God, &c , and violent or flying thoughts thereof run through your minds at times, but do your hearts dwell upon the meditation of it as that which puts life into your hearts in all you believe concerning him?”³³ Knowledge, as we have already seen, is essential in Goodwin’s understanding of justifying faith, nevertheless, one must not exercise an undue rigor, especially with regard to weak believers ³⁴ At the end of the day, Goodwin’s favorite definition of faith is the image of “looking unto Christ”

Now this Spirit, when he comes down thus into the heart, works eyes, and feet, and hands, and all for to look upon Christ, and to come to Christ, and to lay hold upon Christ And faith is eyes, and hands, and feet, yea, and mouth, and stomach, and all, for we eat his flesh and drink his blood by faith ³⁵

Christ As Offered in the Covenant of Grace

Not only does faith eye God as merciful in nature and in will, nor stop at the sight of Christ himself as the God-Man It takes hold of Christ specifically as he is offered in the covenant of grace Here, we reach the target within these concentric circles “Yea, let me add this farther, that God justifying is the main and ultimate object of your faith ”³⁶

Christ’s merits have their efficacy to justify us *ex compacto*, from agreement between the Father and the Son There are two things in justification 1 The right imputed, and that is Christ’s, and to him we go for it 2 The act of imputation, the accounting it mine or thine, and that is the act of God primarily In a word, God’s free grace is the original, Christ’s righteousness is instrumental to the manifestation of free grace, and faith is the instrument of apprehending all And faith, as it is our act, is nothing at all in our justification, but only as it apprehends all God pardons not the debt by halves, nor bestows Christ’s righteousness by parcels, but entitles us to the whole in every of those moments of justification ³⁷

Referring to eternity, the cross, and the resurrection, Goodwin mentions eternity as one of those “moments”, nevertheless, he insists, against the view popular among antinomian Calvinists of the day, that the elect are justified from eternity only in that “God told Christ, as it were, (for it was a real covenant), that he would look for his debt and satisfaction of him, and that he did let the sinners go free, and so they are in this respect justified from all eternity”³⁸ In other words, Goodwin grants justification from eternity no farther than he will grant the covenant of redemption between the members of the Trinity before time. Furthermore, the object of faith is not the work of Christ within the believer, but the work of Christ for the believer, *extra nos*. Because the work of Christ was performed historically, apart from our participation, we can be confident in its efficacy to satisfy God’s judgment, even if we are not confident that we are ourselves in view. Here, Goodwin returns to the covenantal theme of absolute promises, siding with the Lutheran Gerhard, against the skillful apologist for Trent, Robert Bellarmine, and points out his suspicion of even regarding faith as a “condition,” in the sense most likely intended by Bellarmine.

By absolute declarations, &c, I mean such as are not made unto conditions or qualifications, which first should be viewed by the soul to be in itself as a ground to believe upon God and Christ for justification. Gerard, in his controversy with Bellarmine, puts this meaning upon the terms absolute promises and conditional. The promises (says he, speaking of the gospel-promises) may be called absolute in opposition unto our works and merit, and yet conditional in that God requireth faith, and so no works being required to justification, they are in that respect not conditional. But granting, as well as he, that faith is requisite, and faith alone, I do withal affirm that there are promises that are absolute, holding forth no condition, as they are the object of faith. And faith, viewing merely what is in those promises, which specify no condition of faith itself, lays hold on God’s grace, and Christ as therein manifested. And thus absolute promises stand in full opposition unto all conditional promises. ³⁹

Such passages, replete throughout Goodwin’s discussions of the covenant, demonstrate his concern for keeping the objectivity of “Christ set forth” before the believer’s spiritual sight.

Goodwin is even afraid to say with Gerhard that faith alone is the condition for justification, because of the possibility that “conditional” might lead one to believe that there is something left to do in order to make the work of Christ complete. The promise is not, “Come unto me if you will do thus and so,” and likewise Goodwin is worried that even seeing faith as a “condition” will open the floodgate for such covenantal conditionality⁴⁰ “Christ, under the simple and absolute consideration of being a Saviour, is represented to us in the promise as the object of our faith.”⁴¹ Goodwin insists on such terms as “believing on that object requires no conditions”, “the naked object for faith to look at”, “bare proposal of him”, “nakedly declared.”⁴² Further,

God looks on him as ungodly, as one without any work, or disposition, or qualification which he respects in justifying. Yea, he is one who views nothing but the contrary, viz, mere ungodliness in himself, for which he should be condemned. It is true, indeed, that an act of believing is required of him, but that is but now a-putting forth by him, and therefore he builds not upon any former act of faith, for all in himself is in view nothing but ungodliness, and so there is an utter want even of faith itself, as any way seen by him, to induce him to believe on God. Hence then it is that he believes on God nakedly, as viewed to be a justifier of men ungodly, and it is under that consideration he believes on him. And this is the faith which is imputed for righteousness, that noble and heroic pure faith which gives glory to God. For look, as God doth not choose him unto salvation upon faith foreseen, or good works foreseen, so nor doth the soul believe in God upon works foreseen, or faith foreseen. God then looks into his own heart only for that which should move him to do this.⁴³

And yet, Goodwin is not an antinomian--he does not deny that faith is necessary in order to receive Christ, but insists that the believer looks not to his faith, but to Christ, thus the object of faith is an absolute, not a conditional, promise. So far is Goodwin from confusing faith with obedience and a change in *habitus* that he excludes any introspection in the exercise of faith.

And yet withal, it must be said that he actually saves no man without faith. As God thus looks in election at no faith or works in us, so the soul's first act of believing knows not, nor looks at any in his own heart to move or induce him to believe on God, but the soul only looks at what is in God's heart, as declared in the promises, and at his sole free grace in justifying, and yet he knows withal that faith is requisite that he may be justified, and that without it all the grace which is in God's heart would never justify nor save him, whilst yet he had nothing in his eye viewed in himself either directly or collaterally to move him to believe. He hath nothing which either with a direct or squint eye he should consider, but only and merely God as justifying.⁴⁴

So Goodwin is concerned that people may view faith as a work, just as they used to view charity, penance, and other works and graces. Justification is not pronounced on the basis of inward changes, but on the basis of an external righteousness, and Goodwin was clearly concerned that graces and grace had not only been confused by the Arminians, but perhaps even by some of his own brethren. Goodwin was worried that some, by emphasizing the conditional side of the covenant, came perilously close to making that same mistake. That is the motivation behind such comments as the following:

When Paul disputes, as we do against the papists, that no man is justified by works, what! doth he mean external works only? No, but he excludes from our justification our whole righteousness, both root and branch, the inward as the root, and the outward as the branches, because under works of the law is comprehended a complete conformity to the law, and to what the law requires, and so he means hereby inward as well as outward holiness. And thus when the law forbids any evil work, it forbids original sin as well as actual, for law binds the whole man.⁴⁵

But we must once again notice that Goodwin is not alone here in insisting on such sharp distinctions when this question is at stake. In fact, Richard Sibbes warned that confusing justification with sanctification or even with regeneration was tantamount to deserting the faith:

But some others there are amongst us, that regard not Christ and his satisfaction alone, but join faith and works together in justification, they will have other priests, and other intercessors than Christ. Alas! beloved, how are these men fallen from Christ to another gospel, as if Christ were not an all-sufficient Saviour, and able to deliver to the uttermost! What is the gospel but salvation and redemption by Christ alone?⁴⁶

For Sibbes, as for Goodwin, to exercise justifying faith is not to look upon faith, but upon Christ. There is nothing that should move one to believe except “merely God as justifying”--not

God as good and kind, not God as Creator and Provider, nor as Judge and Friend. Nor is one to look to one's own faith as justifying and this accounts, at least in part, for the removal of *fides reflexa* beyond the reaches of the *actus fidei* itself. If believing contains, in its very essence, the experience of "full assurance," one who lacks such an experience will undoubtedly concentrate on the *fides qua creditur* rather than on the *fides quae creditur*. Bishop Ussher shares the same concern to make this point clear. It is *sola fide*, "and that not considered as a vertue inherent in us, working by love, but onely as an instrument or hand of the soule stretched forth to lay hold on the Lord our righteousnesse."⁴⁷

The covenantal scheme, far from introducing a scholastic legalism into the Reformed tradition, provides the metal for what is arguably the clearest defense of forensic justification in the whole Protestant confessional tradition. Far from any "voluntarism" that would prepare the way for an Arminian view of faith, the Westminster Larger Catechism declares,

Faith justifieth a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which doth always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification, but only as it is an instrument by which he receiveth and applyth Christ and his righteousness.⁴⁸

To trust in Christ particularly in the matter of God justifying, is to recognize Christ as the one who fulfilled all obedience owed by each one of the elect to the covenant of works. In effect, the believers are only saved by grace because Christ merited their salvation by works.⁴⁹ Following the Reformation tradition, Goodwin recognizes that everything in the Bible can be divided into the two categories of Law and Gospel. When speaking of the Christian faith in general, the whole of the Bible, is the object of faith. But when speaking of justification, "the grounds of justifying

faith are accordingly the promises of justification and salvation by Christ contained in the word”⁵⁰ He adds elsewhere,

You know that there is a special part of God’s word, which is the gospel Now what is the gospel? Truly it is nothing else (take it strictly in the special sense and meaning of it) but that doctrine which holds forth the grace of God justifying, pardoning, and saving sinners, and which holds forth Jesus Christ made righteousness to us The apostle in Rom x 8, speaking of the gospel in distinction from the law, and from all else in the Scripture, saith, ‘This is the word of faith which we preach’⁵¹

Goodwin insists upon the point especially because it supports his appeal to the Gospel as an unconditional promise The believer who rests on conditions simply does not have any hope While evidences and graces may be useful in the reflex act, they cannot provide any security and will inevitably lead from a covenant of grace to a covenant of works (i e , “Do this and ye shall live”)

He [the one coming to faith] cannot rest on promises conditional, for he sees no qualifications of faith or any grace in himself It is true, says that soul, ‘he that believeth shall be saved,’ but I am now to begin to believe, and have not faith yet, and what ground will you give me of believing? For this there is no answer, but to lay such promises before him ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,’ ‘Christ came into the world to save sinners,’ &c But how, will the soul say, should I know I am one? That, I say, all the world cannot yet assure thee of, no promise is so general as certainly to include thee, none so certain as to design thee How then? says the soul Say I, they are all indefinite, and exclude thee not, they leave thee with an ‘it may be thou mayest be the man,’ and it is certain some shall be saved, and there is nothing in thee shuts thee out, for God hath and will save such as thou art, and he may intend thee As therefore there is in such promises a certainty of the thing promised, that it shall be made good to some, so there is an indefiniteness to whom, with a full liberty that it may be to thee Now if the heart answer but the promise, two things are begotten in it⁵²

Those two things are the faith of recumbency and of assurance⁵³ So much for the motive to throw people back on themselves, if anything, Goodwin demonstrates a concern that the other view drives

people to find faith within themselves, confusing the experience of faith with the object of faith

But is not the “indefiniteness” of it all too skeptical? “Is not the purest and greatest trust shewn in putting one’s self into the hands of a spirit whom we know to be noble, though we certainly know not how he will deal with us?” Goodwin asks ⁵⁴ But then, is this anything more than assent? Not really, since the issue is not, How can I be sure of God’s mercy and promises toward sinners? For we have seen how earnestly he sets out to display these. Rather, Goodwin’s “indefiniteness” is determined by the covenantal, trinitarian scheme in which the Father elects, the Son redeems the elect, and the Holy Spirit brings the elect to faith, and “Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only”⁵⁵ Goodwin maintains that the particularism of the covenant of grace and the corresponding “indefiniteness” of the promises found in Scripture ought not to lead one to despair of salvation “It is as if men should say, We will not go to church, for there is not room for all, and unless a church be built into which all may come, we will not stir”⁵⁶ Christ as he is presented in the universal offer of the Gospel is sufficient as an object of faith, apart from having to say, “This promise is made to you, Frank, and to you, Jane” The promises are general and indefinite in Scripture, Goodwin points out (“Come unto me, all ye”, “Christ came into the world to save sinners”, “whosoever believes”, etc), so we should admit the sufficiency of a general promise ⁵⁷

Goodwin is also aware of the distinction, often useful, between “merit” and “works” Many will say that merit has no place in the matter of justifying faith, but that works are conditions However, Goodwin is resolutely opposed to such a confusion of the Law and the Gospel

It is not the proud notion of merit only, but of works too, must be exploded. God loves not faith as a work, though it saves his children whom he loves, much less will he admit it to be considered in election, which is a purely pure act of himself within himself. If a father should say, Marry my daughter, upon condition that you marry her, I should think he at least speaks not so properly, for to marry her is to have the person herself, and not the condition of having her. And whereas the Scripture says, 'Look unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved.' Looking (there) unto him is not the condition of being saved, but that whereby we are saved, and so 'he that believes hath eternal life.' Marrying a man's daughter (in the case mentioned) is not a condition, but an essential ingredient into the constitutive nature of the thing, and the means of enjoying her person.⁵⁸

In the absence of the typical and more obvious "works of righteousness," human nature will even turn faith into a work. Faith, then, is possessing Christ in all of his righteousness, not the condition of the same, according to Goodwin.⁵⁹ One may accuse the divine of being a bit pedantic in making such fine distinctions, certainly the Lutheran Gerhard, as Goodwin admits above, and other Lutheran and Reformed scholastics⁶⁰ did not consider it odd or inadmissible to call faith a condition. Nevertheless, it is motivated by a concern for upholding the objectivity of the believer's hope and the fear that making faith a condition might lead to making it a work. Even in the Old Testament, "that phrase, 'they found grace,' doth not import a grace inherent or discovered in them, but a grace from God without them, or dwelling in God's heart towards them, and coming from without upon them, not in them."⁶¹ As long as Goodwin affirms the necessity of exercising saving faith before one can be declared righteous, he is affirming the same thing as Gerhard and the Reformed scholastics as well, although he is more reticent than they to employ the term of condition. Therefore, justification is a declaration that we are righteous while we are still sinners, *simul iustus et peccator*, the phrase Goodwin borrows from Luther quite often throughout the treatise. Justification is defined clearly as follows

It is but calling us from what we are not, yea, from the contrary, to be righteous in his righteousness, by the power and dominion of him that is Jehovah, the fountain of being, who says to an ungodly person, 'Thou art righteous,' and in saying it makes him such Rom v 19, 'By the obedience of one man many shall be made (or constituted) righteous' This is the matter of the greatest reality, and hath the firmest being in it, and yet is but an act external upon us, the soul in itself hath no being as to this righteousness, for God justifies it as ungodly, it hath no such being, but God gives it, and gives it by an act that is external to us, answering to that forensic act of pronouncing a man innocent at the bar The second sort of beings or blessings of grace are such as do impress something upon us 62

This is the category for new heart, new creatures, and new obedience, but not of justification 63

And this is why the distinction between Law (the covenant of works) and Gospel (the covenant of grace) is so important for the Puritans like Goodwin But we must not forget that in his officially accepted Catechism of 1563, the Conformist Alexander Nowell declared that true faith embraces

the promises made concerning the mercy of the Father, and the forgiveness of sins to the faithful through Jesus Christ, which promises are properly called the gospel, which faith whosoever have, they do not only fear God as the most mighty Lord of all, and the most righteous Judge, but also they love him as their most bountiful and merciful Father, whom as they travail in all things to please with godly endeavours and works, which are called the fruits of faith, so have they a good and sure hope of obtaining pardon through Christ, when, as men, they swerve from his will For they know that Christ (whom they trust upon), appeasing the wrath of his Father, their sins shall never be imputed any more unto them, than if the same had never been committed 64

Justification 'Remissio' or 'Iustitia'?

R T Kendall and Alan Clifford argue that Calvin held only to *remissio* and not to an active obedience imputed 65 The notion of Christ "meriting" salvation would be repugnant to Calvin, according to the discontinuity thesis 66 In fact, justification is synonymous with remission and pardon 67 Nevertheless, Calvin expressly states, "Justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ" 68 and wrote concerning our fulfillment of the law in Romans 8 3-4, "The only fulfillment he alludes to is that which we obtain through

imputation To declare that by him alone we are accounted righteous, what else is this but to lodge our righteousness in Christ's obedience, because the obedience of Christ is reckoned to us as if it were our own?"^{69]} How then do we understand the statements quoted by Kendall and Clifford, where Calvin insists that justification "is remission, and nothing more"⁷⁰ Since Augustine, justification meant both remission and infusion, along with the graces and habits ⁷¹ When Calvin insists that justification is "only the remission of sins," he is not excluding imputation of Christ's righteousness, which he argues so thoroughly and extensively elsewhere ⁷² Rather, he is excluding the infusion of habits or graces In other words, it is not *remissio* in opposition to those who would add *iustitia*, but in opposition to those who would add *infusio* Once more, some of the writers within this school are so interested in forcing Calvin to debate the Calvinists that they will not allow Calvin to argue with his own real opponents Contrary to the discontinuity thesis, the belief that justification includes not only *remissio* but also a positive imputation of the active obedience of Christ was not invented at Westminster Alexander Nowell adds to his explanation above the following

And though themselves have not satisfied the law, and their duty towards God and men, yet believe they that Christ, with his most full observing of the law, hath abundantly satisfied God for them, and are persuaded that by this his righteousness and observing of the law of God, themselves are accounted in the number and state of the righteous and that they are beloved of God even as if themselves had fulfilled the law And this is the justification which the holy scriptures do declare that we obtain by faith ⁷³

In fact, in Christ's death we have *remissio*, but in his resurrection, *iustus* "For thereof cometh to us righteousness, which before we lacked "⁷⁴ Ussher offers a clear definition of this imputation of Christ's active obedience

Hee did that which we were not able to doe, and absolutely fulfilled the whole law of God for us Why was it necessary that Christ should as well fulfill the Law, as suffer for us? Because as by his sufferings hee tooke away our unrighteousnesse, and freed us from the punishment due to us for our sinnes, so by performing for us absolute Obedience to the whole Law of God, hee hath merited our righteousness 75

Justification is “by the righteousness of our Saviour Christ imputed unto us ” Further, “the onely matter of our joy and triumph both in life and death, must be the imputation of Christ’s righteousness ”76 One can even safely conclude of Cranmer’s generation, with D B Knox, “Both the Bishop’s Book and the Archbishop’s writings reflect those theological tenets which were later to be known as Calvinistic ”77 Knox argues that Tyndale’s 1528 sermon on the “Parable of the Wicked Mammon” was the first treatment of justification *sola fide* Imputation means that God “forgiveth us, and reckoneth us for full righteous ”78 Goodwin, therefore, is in the company of Calvin and the entire subsequent Reformed tradition when he insists on justification as the imputation of the active obedience of Christ 79

In summary of Goodwin’s view of faith’s object, then, God’s merciful nature and will, minted into promises in the form of a covenant of grace, with Christ the mediator and justification as the chief benefits, form the concentric circles which are more than sufficient to anchor the direct act of faith Of all divine attributes, his mercy is the most appropriate to justifying faith as an object, but the seeker requires some sort of confidence not only in God’s mercy and goodness *en esse*; he or she needs some confidence that God has a merciful and saving will toward sinners and this leads finally to Christ and the promises of the covenant of Christ, with the promise of justification, as the object at which faith is to aim

The dangers of making anything, including faith itself, much less its effects, a ground or object of justifying faith are clearly addressed and everything is cleared away from the controlling interest of Goodwin's work. Christ set forth

Part Two The Acts of Faith

As we discovered in the previous chapter, Goodwin would rather describe faith in its actions than define faith in its essence. Here, we gain a better insight into Goodwin's notion of faith, as it is particularly related to justification, first according to its object and now according to its acts.

General Faith vs. Special Faith

We have seen that Goodwin understands faith primarily as "a spiritual sight and knowledge of Christ"⁸⁰. In this there is "the greatest certainty" of the "all-sufficiency of the righteousness in Christ"⁸¹. Faith alone, excluding even repentance, is the instrument of justification and one is impressed with the emphasis one finds in Goodwin, not only in volume eight, but throughout his works,

That nothing but faith in man is that principle which God hath ordained to receive this blessing, and faith only, and faith without works. There are the objects of this faith, both Jesus as the matter of justification (which I have at large discoursed of in those treatises long since published to the world)⁸²

It is "a justification total at once, and eternal for ever"⁸³

Next, Goodwin distinguishes between special and general faith. It is always good to have faith, so the general wisdom goes. It is good to believe in God and in that which is true and right. But this is no more than general faith, the divine suggests. Even devils have general faith.⁸⁴ It is

not merely in their refusal to add *fiducia* to their *notitia* and *assensus*, but their refusal to make Christ as the sinner's justification the special object of "special faith"

Take it in the general notion of assent, what prudence is to all virtues, that faith is to all graces, it is 'wisdom to salvation' But yet there is in it a special faith, without which all the knowledge a man hath, yea, all the knowledge that is unto salvation, would not be unto salvation, were it not for this as to believe a God, and all the attributes of God, all the promises, and all the threatenings, or whatsoever else is contained in the book of God, which being taken by faith into the soul and heart of a believer, makes him wise unto salvation, this, I say, is properly called general faith 85

Even trust for general care is not particular to justifying faith Just as the object of justifying faith must move beyond assent to the Creed, so the act of faith must particularly directed to a specific divine activity--that of saving sinners One may trust God to provide "daily bread," and yet not be justified

I rely upon God for all spiritual things else besides salvation and justification, I rely upon him for his Spirit, I go out unto Christ for holiness, and strength against sin, and for duty, I rely on him, and trust on him, and come unto him for temporal things, I trust him for to sanctify me, in a word, all the promises of good things are the object of that act of trust on God The like may be said of assurance I may have assurance from God of other things as well as of my justification, so as special faith, whereby we are saved or justified, which the apostle here speaks of, is not so called, because it hath a peculiar act appropriated to it Look over all the Scriptures, and all the divine and spiritual truths in them, the belief of those things is not special faith, though they may sanctify the heart, though the heart may be answerably affected thereto, till it come to faith in Jesus Christ, or to trust in the special mercy and grace in God for pardon and justification I will not stand much to shew you, as I might do, that what in the Old Testament is called trusting in the mercy of God, and believing on the mercy of God, that in the New is called believing on Christ 86

Therefore, special faith looks not to trust itself, nor even to God generally, as trustworthy, but seeks out Christ and his righteousness imputed The believer indeed goes often to God as Creator, Provider, Lord and Preserver, hoping not only for pardon but for good providence and temporal

welfare However, special faith--that is, saving faith, comes to God only in his office as "justifier of the ungodly"

To come to Jesus Christ for anything else than for salvation, and for justification, is not a special faith, and then, thirdly, there is a special concomitant, or that which doth accompany it, a special effect, or call it what you will, and that is, that we are justified, though not by the act of believing, yet upon believing, which is evident by this, for how else did they believe 'that they might be justified'? Oh, but this is a special one, not only a sovereign one above all the rest, but it is the only special remedy, for faith only as it is pitched upon the righteousness of Christ, and the free grace of God in him, so it only justifieth Papists say that the article of faith that God created the world is also an object of justifying faith, but not so justifying faith has God in Christ as the justifier as justifying⁸⁷

General faith is necessary, but it is not justifying One must believe in the triune God, and yet this is not, properly speaking, justifying faith "Now, although we are not saved by believing that Jesus Christ is God, but by believing in his righteousness, and on his satisfaction and obedience, as the scripture expresseth it, yet, notwithstanding, we cannot savingly believe the one if we deny the other"⁸⁸ So, for Goodwin, "Christ and him crucified" or "Christ set forth" is the central motif To be sure,

the faith that justifies us is said to do a world of exploits for us besides justifying But yet it doth not justify us as doing any of those things, as Christ he doth not save us as he is a head of all principalities and powers, or as all things were created in him and by him, but he saves us as dying upon the cross⁸⁹

Hence, as Christ crucified for sins and raised for the sinner's justification is the sole object of justifying faith, this believing upon Christ, apart from all else, including repentance, is the sole instrument of the believer's justification Goodwin emphasizes this in commenting upon Romans 3:22, where the apostle "confesseth not himself to have said, on them that believe, but more emphatically also adds, by faith, so as this righteousness is not only said to be on them that believe, for it is on them that repent too, but it is also expressed that it is by believing"⁹⁰ But

here again, Goodwin is not departing from the Puritan tradition, but upholding the common teaching Perkins wrote, in answering the Roman charge that justification required love as well as faith as a condition,

The property of true faith is to apprehend and receive something unto itself and love that goes always with faith as a fruit and unseparable companion thereof is of another nature For it doth not receive in, but as it were give out itself in all the duties of the first and second table towards God and man And this thing faith by itself cannot do The hand hath a property to reach out itself to lay hold of anything and to receive a gift, but the hand hath no property to cut a piece of wood of itself, without saw or knife or some like instrument and yet by help of them it can either divide or cut Even so it is the nature of faith to go out of itself and to receive Christ into the heart⁹¹

Furthermore, “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up” “Even so in the cure of our souls, when we are stung to death by sin, there is nothing required within us for our recovery, but only that we cast up and fix the eye of our faith on Christ and his righteousness”⁹² And not even repentance can serve as a condition alongside faith, according to Perkins “Indeed love, hope, the fear of God and repentance have their several uses in men, but none serve for this end to apprehend Christ and his merits, none of them all have this receiving property and therefore there is nothing in man that justifieth as a cause but faith alone”⁹³ When such passages are so amply furnished in the writings of the principal Puritan divines, over a significant span of time, it is particularly difficult to conceive of how the representatives of the discontinuity thesis can present Puritanism as a shift from a mere reception to moral activism and rampant voluntarism Justifying faith, according to Perkins, like Owen and Goodwin, and every other major Calvinistic divine of the period, is “apprehending Christ,” “receiving Christ,” “looking to Christ,” and nothing else can do this but faith, since none of the other graces is strictly a “receiving

property” Perkins go so far as to declare “ that a sinner in his justification is merely passive, that is doing nothing on his part whereby God should accept him to life everlasting ”⁹⁴

And yet, it is even possible to turn this faith in Christ crucified into a method of works-righteousness and Goodwin seems obsessed with any such natural inclination of the human will making its way into the believer’s faith For instance, “papists and many carnal protestants” meditate on the horror of the passion itself to move the heart,

with an admiring of his noble and heroic love herein, and if they can but get their hearts thus affected, they judge and account this to be grace, whenas it is no more than what the like tragical story of some great and noble personage, full of heroical virtues and ingenuity, yet inhumanely and ungratefully used ⁹⁵

Such is “far from faith,” but mere “fancy”⁹⁶ Such “lively representations of the story of Christ’s passion unto the sight of fancy, do exceedingly provoke men to such devotional meditations and affections, but they work a bare historical faith only, a historical remembrance, and an historical love, as I may so call them ”⁹⁷ Therefore, Goodwin summarizes, “The first direction is this, that in seeking forgiveness or justification in the promises, as Christ is to be principally in the eye of your faith, so it must be Christ as crucified, Christ as dying, as here he is made ”⁹⁸ As we are saved by “Christ above all, so Christ as crucified above all in Christ And as sin is the strength of the law, and of the threatenings thereof, so Christ’s satisfaction is the strength of all the promises in the gospel ” The soteric meaning, not just the fact of his sufferings, is the object of the believer’s faith ⁹⁹

Faith As Instrument, Not Object or Basis

Goodwin was very much aware of and involved with John Owen’s controversies with Arminians,

not only in Holland, but among the English Puritans themselves men such as John Goodwin and Richard Baxter, and a number of other well-placed Puritan divines¹⁰⁰ Therefore, this was not merely an extramural affair, but very much a controversy within the camp This is why Goodwin goes to such pains to define justification not only as remission, but as imputation¹⁰¹

The threat of Arminianism is also why Goodwin is so concerned to get the point across that people are saved *per*, not *propter, fidei* “My brethren,” Goodwin declares, “we are not made righteous by the act of believing, no, we are constituted and made righteous by that obedience of Christ on which we believe”¹⁰² Even faith, if not in directed toward God’s special act of justifying sinners through the righteousness of Christ, cannot save The special object of faith is not God *en se*, but is God in Christ justifying The papists

do find fault with Calvin, and blame him and others of our protestant writers, for saying that the schoolmen erred in making God (simply considered) the object of faith, and for saying that God in Christ, God as justifying, God as rewarding and pardoning sin, as he is thus, is the special object of faith,” but “faith cannot see God as in himself, none can see God and live, that is appointed indeed for vision in the world to come¹⁰³

In fact, knowing God as he is, apart from Christ, “will drive a sinner off from God,” as Adam and Cain, “because all that they know and apprehend of God hath no special promise of mercy to them as sinners from that God”¹⁰⁴ Arminians assume that human nature is either not so severely dominated by sin or that it has been so sufficiently healed by the universal work of Christ and the Holy Spirit that, like the “papists,” they mistakenly believe that a natural man or woman can even desire to be reconciled to God as a friend and father until he reveals himself as the one who justifies the wicked

Go, take a man that is ungodly, and how will this man ever come to believe in God, unless under this notion, that he is one that justifies the ungodly? It is not believing that God is true, or

holy, or just, simply considered in himself, if a man believe these never so strongly, that will justify him not, but to believe on God under this notion, that he is a justifier of the ungodly, this is a man's faith which is accounted to him for righteousness. Now go, take a sinner, he would never have any boldness, never have any confidence, so much as to come to God, he would have no heart to do it, he would be driven off from him, if he did not first look on God as in Christ.¹⁰⁵

Providing a precedent for such views, William Perkins himself argued, against Rome, "But we hold that the faith which justified is a particular faith whereby we apply to ourselves the promises of righteousness and life everlasting by Christ," and not merely "a general or catholic faith" in articles of religion.¹⁰⁶ So much for the Puritans as speculative rationalists who deduced everything from the being of God. Goodwin demonstrates that, at the heart of his entire federal system, is "Christ set forth" as justifier of the wicked, it is even the centerpiece of evangelism, according to his own description. No other revelation will speak about God to a sinner without driving the sinner into deeper hiding as he or she hears God's steps in the cool of the day. Not only is justification necessary, therefore, in order to reconcile us to God, but in order to reconcile God to us. Otherwise,

If we consider ourselves under the first covenant [since all of the unconverted are under the covenant of works or nature], all the attributes of God come in upon us with terror. And therefore, let popish spirits say what they will, yet still unto us as sinners it is God as gracious, God as justifying, it is God as in Christ revealed, which is the proper and special object of justifying faith (emphasis added).¹⁰⁷

Some will indeed admit that God in general is not the object of justifying faith, it is necessary, but not sufficient.¹⁰⁸ Many will even recognize that it is to God as he has revealed himself in the person and work of Christ that one must look in order to be justified. And yet, Goodwin says that even this does not go far enough. To be sure, Christ is not only our justifier, but our sanctifier also, and yet the sinner comes to Christ

for justification first, and sanctification afterwards. And why? Because the power of sin is not first in his eye, but the guilt of sin, therefore answerably justification (take him as he is a sinner), and God as justifying, and Christ as justifying, must needs be in his eye first 109

Only this kind of faith can pacify the heart, “faith only as pitched upon these objects nakedly, and barely, and singly, will quiet the heart, and bring peace with God, nothing else will do it”

(emphasis added) 110 These comments merely serve to reiterate the concern of at least some

Puritans to explain justifying faith as a matter of simply looking to Christ for righteousness

“nakedly, barely, and singly,” apart from repentance, apart from eyeing Christ as sanctifier, apart

from strenuous preparation and energetic activism. Goodwin even insists upon justification as the

thought that the believer must have when approaching God for daily needs. So often, people will

come to God as if he had promised them some temporal good that he now had to recompense

But

the soul can lay hold upon no promise that God hath made (it cannot only neither come to him, nor treat with him, but can lay hold upon no promise else), neither by way of assurance, nor by way of recumbency. Take this for a rule, that your way when you would deal with God for any temporal promise, it is to renew your faith for your justification and salvation 111

If indeed Goodwin does possess a “central dogma,” it is undoubtedly this doctrine that is

uppermost in his mind and about which he is the most anxious to make everything else a

subservient relation in this matter of exercising saving faith. Federalism is a structure or system,

not a central dogma, it merely provides for the crystal clarity on imputation and the two Adams

that one finds in Goodwin and the work with which he was involved (namely, the Westminster

Confession and Catechisms and the Savoy Declaration and Catechisms) proves that he was not a

lone ranger in this field. No clearer statement about the object and acts of justifying faith can be

found than the following from Goodwin

To believe on Christ or upon God, under any other notion, though it may make a man holy, yet it will not justify a man. This necessarily and clearly follows, if (I say), by God as justifying us (out of ourselves) and by his grace, and by Christ's righteousness (which is out of ourselves in him), and by faith, not as a quality or act, but only as apprehending these, if in this sense we are only said to be justified by faith, then it is evident that faith by apprehending these, and by no other act, is said to justify.¹¹²

Although, as we have seen, Goodwin views faith as active and as an act of the will, he is far from the caricature of R. T. Kendall.¹¹³ This Westminster divine insists on the distinction between justification and sanctification and admits no other view of justifying faith than the sinner "throwing himself upon Christ."¹¹⁴ Goodwin points out that for Rome faith is an inherent quality that justifies, and this is embraced by "others," presumably with Arminians on his mind, "who hold that faith justifies as an act"

If a man were justified upon any other act of believing of any divine truth, though believed never so spiritually and truly, and not on this special act of believing on Christ, and on God as justifying, he were plainly and clearly justified by sanctification. If therefore a man were justified by any other faith than by faith throwing himself upon Christ for justification, he should be justified by sanctification.¹¹⁵

This faith is not a direct act that we exercise only once, and then move on to trusting in Christ upon another ground after we become believers. Very often, after conversion, people will suppose that now they can move beyond eyeing Christ for their justification, since they did that at conversion. But now, according to Goodwin, they must go to him for other things. Goodwin is agreed that they must look to Christ for other things--as sanctifier, as friend, as Lord and King, but when justifying faith is considered, the believer must be ever vigilant in allowing no entry to any other object than Christ as the justifier of the ungodly, which speaks of the believer who is growing

in godliness as well as the most recent convert¹¹⁶ Ironically, Goodwin says, if one wants even to grow in sanctification, it is not to Christ as Sanctifier where one will find his or her faith and charity improved, but as one looks upon Christ as Justifier

You cannot believe on God for temporal things, no, not for spiritual things, not for sanctification and making of you holy, further than your faith receiveth increases, and attaineth to more degrees in this thing, that it is more and more exercised upon Jesus Christ and upon God as justifying But you will say, Alas, I believed that long ago, I am already assured that God doth justify me, and shall I now go and live upon that faith, as the great faith by which I must especially live? Yes, certainly, for Abraham did so Consider it now as a truth of very great moment, and which confuteth many errors that run abroad in the world, not only in the hearts of popish divines, but protestants also¹¹⁷

Conclusion

It is quite clear from such passages that Goodwin is a high Calvinist within a Puritan movement that, by the mid-century, was a diverse collection of high Calvinists, moderate Calvinists and outright Arminians R T Kendall, Charles Bell, Basil Hall, Alan Clifford, and others seems to want to “kill two birds with one stone” that is, to divorce Calvin from later Calvinism because they themselves do not find the features in Calvin’s own thinking, made clearer by the refinement of systematic development, attractive and appealing On one hand, these proponents argue, there is the “experimental predestinarianism,” occasioned by an innovative doctrine of a limited atonement which required a federal scheme On the other hand, there is the introduction of scholastic “sophistry” that once again shrouded the Scriptures in the very obscurity from which Calvin had earlier liberated them In this way, moderate Calvinists are allowed to take Calvin and leave the later development of Calvin’s ideas behind, it is, after all, not they (the historical

theologians who take this thesis) who are unfaithful to the tradition, but the tradition itself that is unfaithful to its architect

By now, however, we are already seeing that, at the very least, this thesis is reductionistic. It does not account for the view of faith and justification that we find in Goodwin and others within mainstream Puritanism.¹¹⁸ At the very least, the thesis should recognize the diversity even among English Puritans who were involved with the Westminster Assembly. If Goodwin does not fit the caricatures, and, as we hope to have demonstrated thus far, he is representative of a broad consensus among the divines on these points, the discontinuity thesis requires significant revision. This is not to say that there is perfect accord at every point between Calvin and his successors, but it is to say that whatever differences there are, they do not lead to a new understanding of the object and acts of justifying faith.¹¹⁹

For Goodwin, and those who shared his views, faith was not doing or giving, but simply receiving that which had been done and given. Nevertheless, it was a receiving in which the believer was active, not passive. It was he, and not God, who was believing,¹²⁰ and yet that faith itself possessed no inherent salvific value, it merely apprehended Christ. Justification was the imputation of Christ's righteousness, apart from any inherent righteousness in terms of merit or works, charity or even a goodness in faith itself. Goodwin, as we have observed, is in wholehearted agreement with the insistence of the Westminster Confession in excluding the *habitus* from being any ground or instrumental cause of justifying faith.¹²¹ Justifying faith does not look to God as he is *en esse*, through dark philosophical or speculative wanderings, but as he is revealed in particular promises in the Word of the Gospel that set Christ forth as the one who justifies the ungodly.

Notes to Chapter Five

1 Goodwin represents the tendency within federalism to emphasize the objective (justification) and unconditional (absolute) side of the covenant, especially against other covenant theologians

who seem to be emphasizing the subjective and conditional side excessively

2 8 329

3 *ibid*

4 8 3-6

5 *ibid*

6 *ibid*

7 *ibid*

8 8 6,9

9 *ibid*

10 Goodwin adds, on page 10 “For if it were , it would have been, and would still be necessary for him to shew mercy on the devils ”

11 Kendall, Armstrong, Bell, Clifford, Torrance, et al , fail to recognize that this was, in fact, sufficient for most laypeople in spite of the allegiance to limited atonement That Goodwin and others are capable of providing relief from despair by focusing people directly on Christ as the object of their justification, in spite of their “high Calvinism,” seems to undermine their thesis that the heavy emphasis on preparationism and anxiety over assurance came from the doctrine of limited atonement

12 8 13, 19

13 *ibid*

14 8 27

15 8 30

16 8 31,33

17 8 39

18 8 41-43

19 *ibid*

20 8 46, This is fleshed out in pp 144 ff

21 8 50

22 8 56-7

23 *ibid*

24 8 82-5

25 8 95

26 8 109-10

27 *ibid*

28 8 114-15

29 *ibid*

30 8 117

31 8 121-125

32 8 184

33 8 187

34 8 190

35 8 147

36 8 133-135

37 *ibid*

38 *ibid*

39 8 136

40 *ibid*

41 *ibid*

42 *ibid*

43 8 216-17

- 44 *ibid*
- 45 8 292
- 46 Sibbes, 1 388
- 47 Ussher, p 193, 196
- 48 The Westminster Larger Catechism, *op cit*, Q 73
- 49 Goodwin, 8 237
- 50 8 244
- 51 8 286
- 52 8 245
- 53 *ibid*
- 54 *ibid*
- 55 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 3, Section 6
- 56 8 247
- 57 *ibid*
- 58 8 252
- 59 *ibid*
- 60 Ursinus, *op cit*, p 113
- 61 8 255
- 62 8 360
- 63 *ibid*
- 64 Alan Clifford states, "It is obvious that Calvin's position has been something of an embarrassment to later Reformed theologians who, like Owen, wish to argue that justification is more than pardon." Once again, Beza becomes the nemesis "It was Theodore Beza who insisted that justification was more than pardon" (p 171)
- 65 It must be observed that especially in Alan Clifford's *Atonement and Justification, op cit*, there is a special pleading for harmonizing the Council of Trent, James Arminius, John Goodwin, George Bull, with Calvin--against the Calvinists, that renders his work incoherent by virtue of its attempts to reconcile obviously and inherently contradictory statements. Not only, for Clifford, did Calvin not hold to justification as including the imputation of Christ's obedience, he twists Calvin's words to imply that "justification is no less dependent on the believer's obedience than it is on Christ's righteousness," ignoring the distinction between the necessity of works that follow justification from making justification itself dependent on those works (p 175). Rather remarkably, Clifford announces, "This would suggest that the Arminians rather than the scholastic Calvinists were the true heirs of Calvin, a thought which surely demands a redrawing of the theological map" (p 179). This writer, for one, is unimpressed with Clifford's analysis of the theological map we already possess.
- 66 *ibid*
- 67 *ibid*
- 68 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 11 2, 23
- 69 *ibid*
- 70 *ibid*, 3 11 21. One must bear in mind as well that both Rome and Osiander (the latter arguing for an inclusion of regeneration and an infusion of essential righteousness in the definition of justification) were in view and the antithesis to these positions was to see justification as nothing more than pardon. Calvin was not arguing against the "Calvinists," but many of the adherents to this school insist on making the reformer do just that.
- 71 Cf A. E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification, The Beginnings to the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp 30 ff
- 72 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2 7 2, 2 10 6, 11, 2 17 4-5, 3 4 30, 3 11 2, 23, 3 14 12, 3 15 4, 4 16 18,

- 4172
- 73 Nowell's Catechism, *op cit*, pp 143-4, 160-1
- 74 Ussher, *op cit*, p 174-5
- 75 *ibid*
- 76 *ibid*
- 77 D B Knox, *op cit*, p 3, iii
- 78 *ibid*, p 7, 22
- 79 Goodwin, 8 360
- 80 *ibid*, pp 181-190
- 81 *ibid*
- 82 *ibid*, p 274
- 83 *ibid*
- 84 *ibid*, p 277
- 85 *ibid*, p 275
- 86 *ibid*, pp 278-80
- 87 *ibid*
- 88 *ibid*
- 89 *ibid*, pp 282-3
- 90 *ibid*, p 288
- 91 Perkins, *Works, op cit*, Breward ed, p 539-40
- 92 *ibid*
- 93 *ibid*, p 541
- 94 *ibid*, p 542
- 95 Goodwin, 4 19
- 96 *ibid*
- 97 *ibid*
- 98 *ibid*, pp 16-18
- 99 *ibid*
- 100 Cf Beeke's discussion of the polemical response to John Goodwin by Owen, pp 214-15 and for Edward Dowden's comment that Baxter was "too Arminian for the high Calvinists and too Calvinistic for the Arminians," p 312 fn Daniel Williams was among the Puritans accused of neonomianism by their colleagues, p 290
- 101 Goodwin, 8 288
- 102 *ibid*, pp 289-292
- 103 *ibid*
- 104 *ibid*
- 105 *ibid*
- 106 Perkins, *Works*, Breward edition, *op cit*, p 535
- 107 Goodwin, 8 293
- 108 *ibid*, p 295
- 109 *ibid*
- 110 *ibid*
- 111 *ibid*, p 296
- 112 *ibid*, pp 299-300
- 113 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 209
- 114 Goodwin, 8 300
- 115 *ibid*
- 116 *ibid*, pp 302-3

117 *ibid*

118 Perkins, *Reformed Catholic*, in *Works*, Breward edition, *op cit*, p 526 He distinguishes the Protestant, Puritan view from the Roman view as (1) remission and imputation, on the basis of Christ's merit and righteousness, (2) "That a man is justified by faith alone," and by "no other grace," since that is the only instrument that "lays hold of Christ his righteousness and applieth the same unto himself" The main difference with Rome is determined by the answer to this question "What is the very thing that causeth a man to stand righteous before God and to be accepted to life everlasting? We answer, nothing but the righteousness of Christ, which consisteth partly in his sufferings and partly in his active obedience in fulfilling the rigour of the law The very point of difference is this We hold that the satisfaction made by Christ in his death and obedience to the law is imputed to us and becomes our righteousness The thing [according to Rome, however] that maketh us righteous before God is remission of sins and the habit of inward righteousness or charity with the fruits thereof" We grant, says Perkins, the truth of sanctification, "yet we deny it to be the thing which maketh us of sinners to become righteous or just before God" And "if there were no more points of difference between us this alone were sufficient to keep us from uniting our religions, for hereby the Church of Rome doth raze the very foundation Therefore, nothing can procure unto us an absolution and repentance to life everlasting, but Christ's imputed righteousness," which, Perkins insists, is "no inherent righteousness, not by infusion, but by imputation" (pp 528-31)

119 The departure of later Puritans and, noticeably Goodwin, from continental and early Puritan view of assurance as belonging to faith's essence at least seminally, is important, but it does not affect one's view of the object and acts of justifying faith It is, rather, concerned with the essence of the same The impact of this distinct emphasis will be discussed in Chapters 7-10

120 Kendall argues that, for Calvin, faith is God's act and for the Puritans it is man's, p 201

121 "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone, 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, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves it is the gift of God" Further, faith is "the alone instrument of justification" (WCF, Ch 11, Sections 1-2)

Chapter Six

Conversion Viewed From the Divine Perspective

The psychology of Puritan spirituality has been well-documented and analyzed.¹ As C. L. Cohen demonstrates, “Christian Experience” takes on a new significance in Puritanism, placing the inner workings of the soul in open view.² Spiritual diaries document the movements of that inner world with the descriptive rigor of a journalist.

It is not that the experience of grace was not important to the reformers themselves. Luther’s renowned declaration that no man can be a theologian unless he has experienced damnation is matched by Calvin’s insistence at the beginning of Book Three of the *Institutes* that the objective work of Christ would avail nothing unless it were subjectively applied and received.³ Thus, in Calvin’s pneumatology, the *unio mystica* becomes central. But what is noticeably absent from the reformer is the Puritan emphasis on the existential awareness and analysis of this experience of grace. This might be explained simply by his insistence on assurance as essential to faith. After all, if for Calvin faith is “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us,”⁴ there is little need for any emphasis on the reflex act—that is, the assurance that one is believing. It would seem that the Puritan distinction between *fides* and *fides reflexa* (i.e., assurance) is largely responsible for the heightened psychological and subjective awareness of one’s conversion to Christ. The Genevan reformer is suspicious of introspection and warns against spending too much time contemplating one’s own spiritual estate.⁵

But does this represent a fundamental theological discontinuity? Perhaps, once again, this

contrast may be better understood in view of the different contexts. For the reformers, introspection led to doubt rather than to faith and there seemed to be no end to the speculation about one's state without an anchor in the steadfast decree and declaration of God. Although overstated, Cohen's observation offers substantial insight. If, as Calvin allowed, the reprobate may possess temporary faith,⁶ how can one be assured that the faith he or she exercises is not of this sort? While one may discern a marked introspective emphasis in the Puritans that is lacking in Calvin, was this due to a dogmatic shift, or was it an attempt to think through the very subject raised by Calvin in the first place? How does one encourage a late medieval Roman Catholic layperson to look to Christ in saving faith, as the reformers were concerned to do? How does one encourage an early modern English Protestant layperson to discern whether he or she possesses that saving faith, as was the interest of the Puritans? Those are two very different questions and audiences, and that brings us to our consideration of the Puritan doctrine of conversion--the application of redemption, and its relationship to assurance.

So far, we have examined Goodwin's treatment of faith's essence, object, and acts. But what are the divine operations behind faith and repentance? What is the relationship of faith to repentance, and is union with Christ the cause or the effect of faith? These and similar questions concern Goodwin, as they concerned his predecessors and contemporaries, and we shall consider those matters here. The emphasis on union with Christ not only offers one an opportunity to view the whole landscape of redemption, from the divine point of view as well as from the human side, it is an emphasis motivated by a concern for the rising tide of Pelagianism. As Dewey Wallace observes, "For Owen and the high Calvinists, the purpose of emphasizing the union of the believer

with Christ was to evidence the weakness and unspirituality of that moralistic religiosity they saw rapidly gaining ground and which was in effect a denial of God's grace."⁷ It is that same condition described by Patrick Collinson and his collection of Puritan representatives who decry the "popular Pelagianism" of the average seventeenth-century Englishman.⁸

The Nature of Regeneration

From the divine side, according to Goodwin, the cause of the believer's acceptance of Christ is the union that is made by the Holy Spirit directly.⁹ First of all, Goodwin insists, regeneration is not an ontological change.¹⁰ Rather, it is a quickening of the soul and the refashioning of the heart, from opposition to God to seeing him as a loving and merciful Father. The main idea in Goodwin's concept of regeneration is "the eminent mercy of God."¹¹ After all, it is not something that happens because of something inherent in human beings, nor because of something they have done, but is purely dependent on an act of divine mercy and compassion. There is no motive in God for one's regeneration but his own divine goodness and mercy, neither *propter opera*, nor *secundum opera*.¹² In other words, "We cannot beget ourselves," Goodwin says. "We contribute nothing, but are merely passive. Therefore, an infant is as capable of all the essentials of regeneration as a man grown up; and therefore of baptism."¹³ This is an important remark, and we shall consider it under the discussion of the church and sacraments, but Goodwin is not unrepresentative at this point. While Nicholas Tyacke sharply contrasts a high view of sacramental grace with a high view of predestinating grace, here we see that one does not necessarily cancel out the other.¹⁴

According to Goodwin, in justification, God says, "I shall no longer condemn you"; in

regeneration, "Sin shall not reign," which Goodwin takes "as a promise, as well as a command" ¹⁵

It is the divine indicative that determines that sin shall no longer maintain its despotic rule, and only secondarily an imperative that the regenerate believer is to recognize and allow to define his or her identity and action. Nevertheless, this change is not something that can be reduced to a pattern or formula.

In a thousand of these varieties doth he deal with souls, and playeth with us in his wooings, that his ways should be past finding out. And if all the stories of souls converted in this as well as in the primitive times were written, you would admire Christ for nothing more than his art of love, and the variety of his artifices in wooing, and his manifold wisdom in contriving mercies in conversions. ¹⁶

Goodwin is convinced that there can be no question but that regeneration is the sovereign work of God in his omnipotent mercy. Some were content to see visible signs of change in a person's behavior. Surely that was evidence of regeneration. "Some will say, I am no adulterer, no drunkard, no unjust person, but sober, chaste, etc., and is not this a work of God's power in me, and of his grace, being more than in nature?" Yes, it is more, but it may well be "restraining grace," not saving grace, "keeping a dead body from stinking." "For though it be a work of the Spirit, yet it doth not follow it is saving grace." Fear of hell, for instance, motivates. ¹⁷

But we are reminded once more that the motivation for these remarks is not to cause the believer to doubt or to encourage legalistic introspection, rather, it is calculated to subvert moralism. When men and women conclude that because they are not notorious rebels against God they must necessarily be regenerate, they are trusting in external performances of which the unregenerate are capable. Civil virtue is not necessarily evidence of regeneration, and that was important in maintaining a defense against a creeping naturalistic moralism. Goodwin argues that

the exceeding power of regeneration is displayed in that bondage to sins and fears is broken, the temporal focus is shattered, and above all, hostile men and women end up embracing the Gospel unto justification.¹⁸ Even the discussion of conversion and regeneration (the work of the Holy Spirit) should not become an occasion for driving people deeper into themselves and into the machinations of their inner piety. “Now, therefore, that we may be driven out of ourselves, to seek life in another by faith, it is necessary we should be killed in ourselves, and see, and apprehend ourselves dead men, and all our works dead works.”¹⁹

The “virtual cause of regeneration is the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” Goodwin observes.²⁰ Here again, one might wish to point out the corruption of the original Calvinian theology by the imposition of such Aristotelian categories, but Goodwin has no difficulty employing them (any more than Calvin himself) when they have an exegetical foundation. In stating, for instance, that the resurrection is “the virtual cause of regeneration,” Goodwin cites 1 Peter 1:3-5, which reads, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (Authorized Version). Therefore, “When Christ died and rose again, we were in him by representation, as performing it for us, and no otherwise, but as so considered we were justified. But now when we come in our persons, by our own consent, to be made one with him actually, then we come in our persons through him to be personally and in ourselves justified, and receive the atonement by faith.”²¹

The distinction made by the Westminster divines between the universal call and the effectual call is in Goodwin called the “general indefinite proclamation” (to which the first act of faith looks) and the divine “whisper,” calling upon John 10 3 (where Jesus says that “My sheep hear My voice and follow Me”) ²² This so-called *mysticus practicus* is really little more than the Confession’s distinction in Chapter Ten between the general and special or efficacious call Says Goodwin,

I do not mean that it is always so loud a voice as shall quell and prevail against doubts in a man’s sense, so as to triumph with assurance that Christ is his It is like the secret scent a bloodhound hath gotten of the hart that is struck, when the master hath bade it go seek, which though he see not the hart, yet it carries him on till he find him out ²³

Goodwin does emphasize this direct encounter more than some other Puritans, perhaps because of his influences from continental pietism, but he is certainly not introducing any new teaching among the Puritans

Conversion

Contrary to the discontinuity thesis, which maintains that the Puritans followed Beza in placing repentance before faith,²⁴ Beza himself does not even fit this description, as Robert Letham argued so persuasively ²⁵ In fact, Beza denies “that correction of life is the road to Christ Neither do we come to Christ because we have corrected our life but, on the contrary, because Christ first loved us and comes to us and is in us and we in him so we advance daily in amending our life ”²⁶

Beyond these observations, it is essential to mark how *repentance* is used in different contexts For instance, repentance precedes faith for Luther and the Lutheran tradition in general, but that is

because repentance is the work of the Law in driving a sinner to despair of his or her righteousness and flee to Christ. As the Law precedes the Gospel, so repentance precedes faith.²⁷ One thing was certain for both Calvin and the Calvinists. If repentance is used to refer to acts of righteousness, these acts cannot precede faith, since that which does not proceed from faith is sin.²⁸ Calvin says, "We will never seriously apply to God for pardon, until we have obtained such a view of our sins as inspires us with fear."²⁹ If this view of our sins that inspires us with fear is "repentance," as Luther understood it, then surely repentance precedes faith.³⁰ In his suggestion that Beza is the first to insist on the preaching of the law before the preaching of the gospel, Kendall³¹ seems therefore rather oblivious to the centrality of this hermeneutic in Lutheran³² as well as Reformed³³ hermeneutics. Paul Helm correctly points out that the Puritans recognized two kinds of repentance: legal and evangelical.³⁴ "The Puritans," Helm writes, "allowed that legal repentance may precede saving faith, and even exist without it, as in the case of Judas. But evangelical repentance accompanies and arises from faith."³⁵ This one distinction maintained by the Puritans and entirely ignored by Kendall would go far toward eliminating any fear of the fruit of evangelical repentance being confused with preparation for the gospel itself.

It is one thing to say that faith precedes repentance and quite another to say that union with Christ precedes faith. In all of these discussions, Goodwin represents the main concern of his tradition: to uphold monergism and bar human beings from receiving any glory for their own regeneration. In his Lesser Catechism, Owen puts it in the following form: "What do we ourselves perform in this change, or work of our conversion? A. Nothing at all, being merely wrought upon by the free grace and Spirit of God, when in ourselves we had no ability to any thing that is

spiritually good ”³⁶ Repentance involves three things “alteration of the mind into a hatred of sin, once loved, secondly, sorrow of the affections for sin committed, thirdly, change of the actions arising from both ”³⁷ Holiness in every believer is perfect, not in the sense of degree, but in its parts ³⁸ But it is clear from these definitions that repentance and ensuing holiness are gifts of the union and effects of faith, rather than vice versa

Goodwin does define repentance as a turning from sin that results in mortification of the flesh and new habits And here, too, he is in good company Nowell’s Catechism had this question and answer

How many parts be there of repentance? Two chief parts the mortifying of the old man, or the flesh, and the quickening of the new man or the spirit Can we not, therefore, prevent God with any works or deservings, whereby we may first provoke him to love us, and be good unto us? Surely, with none For God loved and chose us in Christ, not only when we were his enemies, that is, sinners, but this is the same spring-head and original of our justification, whereof I spake before ³⁹

Ussher’s Catechism declared that repentance is

an inward and true sorrow for sinne, especially that we have offended so gracious a God, and so loving a Father, together with a settled purpose of heart, and a careful endeavour to leave all our sins, and to live a Christian life, according to all Gods commandments How is the reformation of our selves to newnesse of life wrought in us? Only by the promise of the gospell, whereby we feele the fruit of the rising again of Christ ⁴⁰

The terrors of the Law cannot excite sinners to a new obedience such is merely a “legal repentance,” as Judas was said to have repented ⁴¹ Only the gospel can give one a new will and a new motivation to turn from sin to God, and this is “evangelical repentance ”⁴²

The Errors of Some Protestants In Understanding Faith and Conversion

After his discussion of regeneration, Goodwin boldly tackles “the errors of some Protestants in understanding faith and conversion ”⁴³ We have seen how concerned Goodwin is to make

immediately pastoral applications of his theory. He does not wish to discuss God or even faith as they are in their essence, but describes both most comfortably in relation to their actions.

Similarly, Goodwin has not simply been offering a traditional Protestant doctrine of justification because it was a regular part of any systematic theology, rather, it was out of a very real concern that the evangelical understanding of grace, faith, justification, election, covenant, and conversion were being distorted, ignored, or denied in his own day.⁴⁴ As to the declension over faith,

Goodwin divided the five errors frequently made by Protestants into the following categories:

(1) Regarding faith as mere *assensus*; (2) taking Christ for granted. "Their faith is a mere want of doubts, not an application of Christ with comfort. As they never doubt but that Christ is theirs, so they never have many thoughts about him as theirs, but do take it for granted, as a thing they never call into question, and yet it was never proved to them"; (3) their presumption has their own good, and not Christ, as its object. Further, (4) their faith is external and merely formal, (5) a subtle works-righteousness was making inroads. They profess justification, "yet still secretly their own righteousness is the ground even of that their very trust on Christ. Thus they use to think that Christ will rather save them for the smallness of their sins and good dispositions, and so that in that respect they are nearer to Christ than others although in the mean time they are sound in their opinions about justification by faith and by Christ only."⁴⁵ We shall consider each of these in

turn.

As for Goodwin's first complaint, one is led to wonder, in the light of the discontinuity thesis proponents, how someone as "voluntaristic" as Goodwin could express discouragement concerning the widespread confusion of faith with mere assent. Surely it is because locating the seat of faith in the will does not necessarily require a reduction of faith to mere assent. Second, Goodwin is

concerned that so many Protestants take Christ for granted because they have never doubted that he belongs to them. If they have never struggled to have it proved to them, how can they appreciate the joy of true assurance? Furthermore, they merely want to be saved from hell and live forever in heaven, so their faith is purely formal and self-centered: they are not looking to Christ, but to their own happiness.

And most damning according to Goodwin, many Protestants tolerate a creeping works-righteousness, even though they denounce it verbally. It is this fifth error that Goodwin is especially concerned to unveil. If there was one thing of which most English Protestants (Conformists or not) thought they could not be guilty, it was works-righteousness. For most Protestants, “merit” was a dreaded word, but “works,” of course, was a very positive word. It was positive for all of the right reasons, from the Protestant point of view. Did God not predestine the elect to be conformed to the image of Christ and to good works? But because “works” had a positive and negative tone (depending on whether one tried to use them for justification), it was very easy to smuggle works into the act by emphasizing a conditional covenantal structure. Even faith can be seen as a value in and of itself, so that the virtue is in the believing rather than in Christ, but unlike love, faith itself possesses no virtue, Goodwin argues.

For in loving God, we return something to him, love for his love, we give as well as we take, but in believing we receive all from God. Believing is passion rather than action, for indeed God puts Christ upon us and into our hands, or we would not take him. [So] it is not for any worth in [faith] itself, but as it is an instrument singled out by God to do all by in us. So that in commending faith, and desiring you so earnestly and above all to believe, we do desire you but to set up Christ in your hearts above works, and above obedience, and let him be all in all. If God had used any other grace, some honour would have reflected upon it, and so much have been taken away from God: for faith is but the bare fetching it [salvation] from Christ.⁴⁶

There must be no playing about with terms such as “conditions of the covenant” that are not

“meritorious,” says Goodwin ⁴⁷ Faith is “the sole instrument in the covenant of grace, and works and obedience are but subservient, and as a consequence annexed to it, though as necessarily annexed as the other Our great business in the covenant of grace is faith, as the form of the covenant of works lay in doing” ⁴⁸ Why? “That it might be of grace, given freely, requiring nothing, but receiving” ⁴⁹ Notice again that Goodwin, a “voluntarist” by the standards of Kendall, et al, nevertheless emphasizes the notion that faith is a “mere receiving,” as indeed the Confession of Faith calls faith “accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone” ⁵⁰

Faith is the only condition (and he is unhappy to even allow faith to be called a condition, further distancing himself from the antinomians), and receiving is the sole activity of faith pertaining to justification This is Goodwin’s irreducible core It makes everything depend on God, “and to require nothing but receiving and believing the promise from him, that the covenant might not depend on us, but on God and his promise, and upon nothing in us but receiving and believing the promise,” ⁵¹ since “in the covenant of grace, God hath to do with terrified consciences, which, if anything else than faith should have been required, could not have been raised up to any persuasion of God’s love and favour” ⁵² Notice again how Goodwin identifies faith with “persuasion of God’s love and favour,” underscoring his continuity with Calvin Hence, faith is the sole instrument, so that salvation will be (1) by grace, (2) by promise, (3) sure Therefore, says Goodwin,

Let lusts, devil, hell do what they will, the believer is secure, if lusts rage, whereas other graces left to themselves would say, ‘Who shall deliver us?’ Faith raiseth up itself ‘I thank’ (saith the apostle, Rom vii 25), ‘my God through Jesus Christ,’ &c Let God frown and terrify us, and do what he will, faith can look upon him and trust him, Job xiii 15 so there is no grace can receive Christ but faith, no duty, no performance can help thee to him Love indeed makes us cleave to him also, but yet faith first, for faith works love, and we cannot love him till we believe

he loves us, 1 John iv 10,16 ⁵³

Finally, Goodwin's view of God's saving operations in regeneration is remarkably eschatological. Far from ignoring the corporate and, indeed, cosmic realities of this work, we have seen how he, following Paul in Romans six, links regeneration to Christ's resurrection ⁵⁴. But there is more to it than that: the new age of the Spirit has dawned and believers are swept into this new age, in contrast to the one that is passing away. In short, "God hath made a new world, whereof Jesus Christ is the sun" ⁵⁵. And faith is the umbilical chord that holds us to Christ until we are finally born into the new world, where faith will be replaced with sight ⁵⁶.

Conclusion

There is an unquestionable difference in emphasis between the reformers and the Puritans in this matter of experience. From the new experimental interest in conversion came a psychological and existential emphasis that, much like continental pietism, distinguished this particular expression of Reformed theology. When Calvin, for instance, discussed conversion it was in the theological language of the law and the human conscience rather than the detailed cartography of the soul that gave rise to some of the most introspective as well as moving prose in the English language. This is perhaps why we have so little of Calvin's own spiritual experience on record, although one cannot make too much of that in the light of Luther's rather graphic and passionate account of his own experience. Nevertheless, there is very real change in the philosophical and existential worlds between Luther and Goodwin that influences the distinct emphases.

G. F. Nuttall has offered a brilliant analysis of these changes and suggests that there is a direct connection between Puritanism and the rise of Quakerism in the emphasis on the Holy Spirit ⁵⁷.

Cromwell's Protectorate saw the rise of radical sects that took experimental piety to a new level, with extreme Congregationalists confirming the suspicions of the Presbyterians that Independency was inherently enthusiastic.⁵⁸ In fact, William Erbury, one preacher who, like Roger Williams, finally refused to belong to any group, articulated a vision remarkably reminiscent of the medieval mystic Joachim of Fiore

God under the Law and to the Fathers before, was known, as the Father. In the Gospel God was known, as the Son, or the knowledg of the Son was peculiar to the Gospel-dispensation. The third will be pure Spirit, when nothing but Spirit and power shall appear, when God shall be all in all.⁵⁹

But, as Nutall points out, Erbury also imagined "four great steps of Gods glorious appearance in mens preaching."⁶⁰ Sibbes occupies the second step, "both the famous Goodwins" are placed on the third, while "the fourth step which some have attained to is holding forth Christ in the Spirit, as Mr William Sedgwick, Mr Sterrie, Mr Sprig, and others."⁶¹ Robert Baillie, the Presbyterian divine, was the principal antagonist among the Westminster Assembly toward the Independents for just such sentiments on the outer fringes of dissent and separatism. Furthermore, Baillie expressed frustration with the perceived instability of the Independents and their "readinesse to change any of their present Tenets."⁶²

Nevertheless, Nutall fails to appreciate the diversity within Independency as well as Presbyterianism and Anglicanism, in which the same tendencies toward gnostic visions were also capable of being expressed. One gains the impression from Nutall's account that the Independents were all enthusiasts, the last stop on the way to Quakerism, each key figure cited above occupying a step in the devolution of English nonconformity. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Goodwin, like Owen, is resolutely opposed to enthusiasm and, if anything, reintroduces a sense of Calvinistic

suspicion with regard to relying on the inner life--determined to focus the sinner's gaze on Christ objectively considered as the sacrifice for sin *extra nos*

While we cannot fail to observe a heightened interest in conversion and the psychology of religious experience, Goodwin's doctrine of conversion is identical to Calvin's and that of the Reformed tradition generally. Expressions and metaphors may be more colorful and personal, in the tradition of Christian mysticism, than one finds in the Reformation and post-Reformation dogmatics, nevertheless, the doctrine is essentially consistent. In the "first conversion," the sinner is not active, but acted upon. In the process and acts that follow as necessary consequences, one is active in cooperating with divine grace. Faith is a mere receiving and as such is the sole condition of union with Christ and all of his benefits, as long as "condition" is not regarded as anything more than an instrument that receives Christ and not a virtue in and of itself that can in any way claim to contribute any inherent worthiness to justification and union. Nevertheless, faith brings with it every Christian virtue and these may be used as assuring graces in the reflex act of faith.

Notes to Chapter Six

1 Cf Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Dewey Wallace, Jr., *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans: An Anthology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), G. F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). In fact, Nuttall observes, "This stress on experience is, indeed, a characteristic of the seventeenth century in England, the century which has Hamlet as its prototype and exemplar, and one could be only surprised if there were no corresponding emphasis in theology" (p. 7).

2 C. L. Cohen, *op cit*.

3 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.1.

4 Calvin, *ibid*, 3.13.3-5.

5 Dewey Wallace, *op cit*, p. 155.

6 Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of the Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625*.

(Oxford Oxford University Press, 1980), p 202

7 Goodwin, 6 385

8 Cf Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists, op cit*

9 Goodwin, 6 405

10 6 412

11 6 408

12 6 414

13 6 429-33

14 6 444-6

15 6 447, cf 6 455, 8 139, 248-9

16 R T Kendall, *op cit*, pp 25-35

17 Robert Letham, *op cit*, p 37

18 Cf Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia Fortress, 1988), pp 254-5

19 Calvin, commentary on Psalm 51 3

20 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 3 4

21 Perkins, Works, 6 384

22 Owen, 1 487-8

23 Nowell's *Catechism, op cit*, p 177, 181

24 Ussher, *op cit*, pp 331-2

25 Goodwin, 8 331-3

26 8 460-3

27 8 468

28 8 471

29 Calvin, *Institutes* 2 8 1n

30 G F Nuttall, *op cit*, p 107

31 R T Kendall, *op cit*, pp 61-63

32 Edmund Schlunk, for instance, calls the Law-Gospel order and distinction "the theme of the entire Lutheran theology" (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1961, trans by Chr Kaiser Verlag in 1948), p 122 Paul Althaus remarks that this is "most fundamental in Luther's theology" (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1966, p 51, trans by Robert C Schultz) As perhaps the most conspicuous mark of Lutheran hermeneutics, one is surprised to see so many "discontinuity" scholars overlooking the Puritans' continuity with the magisterial Reformation on this point--not only Calvin's, but Luther's

33 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2 9 4 Further, in his explanation of rewards against Rome, Calvin exegetes the story of the rich young ruler (Mt 19 17) in a strictly Law-Gospel manner The intention was not to merely exhort, but to cause the man to see that he had not truly kept the Law "With a clear voice we too proclaim that these commandments are to be kept if one seeks life in works And Christians must know this doctrine, for how could they flee to Christ ?" But Jesus did not always deal this way with inquirers, since "elsewhere he comforts with the promise of grace without any mention of the law others who have already been humbled by this sort of knowledge" (3 18 9)

Beza explicitly carried on Calvin's work and no better can this consistency be observed than in Beza's *Confessio*, published in Geneva in 1558 In the *Confessio*, Beza addresses "The means which the Holy Spirit uses to create faith in the heart of the elect" His answer, of course, is the Word and the sacraments, and these discussions therefore follow But the discussion of "The Word" itself is divided into two parts "The Law" and "The Gospel"

We divide this Word into two principal parts or kinds the one is called the 'Law,' the other the 'Gospel' For,

all the rest can be gathered under one or the other of these two headings. What we call Law (when it is distinguished from Gospel and is taken for one of the two parts of the Word) is a doctrine whose seed is written by nature in our hearts. What we call the Gospel ('Good News') is a doctrine which is not at all in us by nature, but which is revealed from Heaven (Mt 16:17, Jn 1:13), and totally surpasses natural knowledge. By it God testifies to us that it is his purpose to save us freely by his only Son (Rom 3:20-22), provided that, by faith, we embrace him as our only wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1Cor 1:30).

Beza warns, "We must pay great attention to these things. For, with good reason, we can say that ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the principal sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt Christianity." Why is this? People always turn the Law into something easy and the Gospel into something difficult, as if the Gospel were "nothing other than a second Law, more perfect than the first." We do not know our sinfulness. "This is why God begins with the preaching of the Law," and after discussing this point more fully, he concludes, "There then is the first use of the preaching of the Law." But "after the Law comes the Gospel" in preaching (Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith*, trans. by James Clark [Lewes, England: Focus, 1992], pp. 40-51).

In his *Commentary on The Heidelberg Catechism*, the Ursinus divides the Word into Law and Gospel in a manner identical to that of Beza and Calvin. In fact, in the Prolegomena, he writes, "The doctrine of the church consists of two parts: the Law, and the Gospel, in which we have comprehended the sum and substance of the sacred Scriptures. The Law is called the Decalogue, and the Gospel is the doctrine concerning Christ the mediator, and the free remission of sins through faith. Therefore, the Law and Gospel are the chief and general divisions of the holy scriptures, and comprise the entire doctrine comprehended therein."

The Law commands, the Gospel gives. "The Law is known from nature, the Gospel is divinely revealed." Therefore, "the Law is our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ." (Zacharius Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. by G. W. Willard [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, reprint of 1852 edition], pp. 2-3). It is also prominent in his *Major Catechism* of 1562. The Basel theologian Johannes Wollebius (1586-1629) is representative of the next generation when in his *Compendium Theologiae Christianae* he wrote, "The Redeemer is known both through the Law and through the Gospel, from the Law we learn the need for a redeemer, and from the Gospel we learn the truth of redemption" (Johannes Wollebius, *Compendium Theologiae Christianae*, in *Reformed Dogmatics*, edited and trans. by John W. Beardslee III [New York: Oxford University Press, 1965], p. 75. Cf. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. by G. M. Giger and ed. by J. T. Dennison, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994], esp. pp. 200 ff). In his *Systematic Theology* Louis Berkhof (1873-1957) discusses the Law under "The Doctrine of the Word As A Means of Grace," with the heading, "The Two Parts of the Word of God: The Law and the Gospel." "The Churches of the Reformation from the very beginning distinguished the law and the gospel as the two parts of the Word of God," he writes. "There is law and gospel in the Old Testament and there is law and gospel in the New. The law comprises everything in Scripture which is a revelation of God's will in the form of command and prohibition, while the gospel embraces everything, whether it be in the Old Testament or the New, that pertains to the work of reconciliation and that proclaims the seeking and redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus" (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], pp. 612-613).

34 Paul Helm, *op cit*, pp. 64-65

35 *ibid*, p. 65

36 John Owen, *The Lesser Catechism*, *op cit*

37 *ibid*

38 *ibid*

- 39 Nowell, *op cit*, pp 181-5
- 40 Ussher, *op cit*, p 331
- 41 *ibid*
- 42 *ibid*, pp 331-333
- 43 Goodwin, 8 330
- 44 *ibid*
- 45 *ibid*, pp 331-337
- 46 *ibid*, p 336
- 47 *ibid*, pp 331-332
- 48 *ibid*, p 461
- 49 *ibid*
- 50 The Westminster Confession, *op cit*, Chapter XVI, Section 2
- 51 Goodwin, *ibid*, p 461
- 52 *ibid*
- 53 *ibid*, pp 462-463
- 54 *ibid*, pp 467-468
- 55 *ibid*, p 468
- 56 *ibid*, p 471
- 57 This is his entire thesis in Geoffrey F Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago The University of Chicago Press, 1992)
- 58 *ibid*, pp 48-60, 113, 118-120
- 59 cited *ibid*, p 106
- 60 *ibid*
- 61 *ibid*
- 62 cited *ibid*, p 24

Chapter Seven

The Application of Redemption

Part One The Difficulty of Faith

When asked by one of his students during a lecture on justification, “How can it be that easy?”, Martin Luther is said to have replied, “You think faith is easy.” Whether this account is reliable, it was certainly stated on numerous occasions by the German Reformer¹ Goodwin, too, has a great deal to say about the difficulty of faith. It is not difficult because of something lacking in the object, nor is there an impaired faculty. It is not as if human beings do not have the right tools of apprehending the good news, but that everything within them is set resolutely against it and the God who offers it. It is the belief that faith is easy that often oppresses those who do not find it so. Goodwin observes,

Men think if they could but do other things as well as believe, they should do well enough. To pray, and to keep the Sabbath, and to part with lusts and beloved sins, these things indeed are hard and difficult, and to a man impossible, but to believe in Christ for salvation, this they make nothing of, and whatever they do, they will surely believe and never despair, and if they come to a poor soul that is any whit troubled, they rate him, and use to say, Thou art a fool indeed, canst not believe? And hence of all works else men mind this of faith the least. They make a business of it to be humbled, and to have strength to perform duties, but to believe, they think that would easily follow if they could but do other things that God requires.²

So no wonder “that they should run up and down from this ordinance to that in such a restless manner, turmoil themselves about obtaining him, as if there were any question to be made of having him at any time, or any difficulty in it.”³ Goodwin wants the believer to recognize the

reality of sin and doubt even in the life of the Christian, so that the exercise of faith will not become an overwhelming burden to replace the burden of works-righteousness⁴ Again we come to a point that receives a great deal of attention in R. T. Kendall's defense of the discontinuity thesis. Kendall reads this characteristic Puritan emphasis on the difficulty of faith as a departure from the reformers, particularly Calvin. At last, if the Puritans cannot turn faith into a work, they will at least turn it into something very difficult, not unlike a work.⁵ But is that Goodwin's intention here? Goodwin insists that believing is difficult because of (1) its excellence, (2) the problem of self-righteousness, and (3) the difficulty in being convinced that we are sinners.⁶ There is nothing said of its difficulty due to the failure of the sinner to conjure it up or to bring it to full flower. The very reason faith is difficult is that men and women will even try to turn it into a work. It is difficult because natural reason seeks its own excellence, its own self-righteousness, its own way to God that does not require the confession that one cannot approach God in his or her own righteousness. It is difficult, Goodwin says, because "there is nothing in the heart to help towards it. There is all in the heart, and without the heart, against it. There is nothing in the heart that induceth it to believe. There is no principle to promote it and help it forward."⁷ So far is Goodwin from using the difficulty of faith to turn it into a work that he repeats Luther's warning about good works being as potentially dangerous to our faith as evil works.⁸

The difficulty, therefore, is not natural, but moral. In other words, it is not humanity *as* human that makes faith difficult (indeed, impossible), but the moral slavery of human nature. Goodwin says that this is what Christ meant when he told the Pharisees that if they could not accept Moses (the Law), which is more natural to them (being written on the mind), they surely

could not embrace Christ (the Gospel) ⁹ To simply command a person to believe will come to the unregenerate man or woman as a command that is merely Law, not Gospel “You command me to believe I say, I cannot, your command is as impossible to me as to keep the moral law”¹⁰ This moral difficulty of faith is, then, due chiefly to the fact that the Law is natural to us, unlike the Gospel In fact, not only unrighteousness keeps us bound, but

All the righteousness that is in a man for time past, and endeavours for time to come, also hinder the work of faith A man, when he sees his former sinfulness and want of faith, and hath suffered the wreck of all his former estate, is apt to begin of his own cost to build a new ship to set to sea in, and lades it upon a new stock with new wares of duties he never did afore, and launcheth it into profession, and thinks by his own rowing, and tugging, and hauling, in the end to arrive at Christ, who goes as fast from him as he makes after him, whilst he thus goes out in his own strength A man may seek the righteousness of faith, and yet not by faith, or in a way of faith and sense of a man’s own inability, and so seek after the faith itself ‘as if it were a work of the law,’ and then, as Paul says, as a man condemns himself in what he allows, so he undoes himself in what he endeavours, and goes to hell by striving to go to heaven ¹¹

Even in seeking the righteousness which is by grace through faith, one can set out to obtain it by turning faith into a legal matter, if the only justifying work Satan, too, conspires with the religion of works-righteousness and will even use good things to distract men and women from the cross, says Goodwin ¹² So absurd is the Gospel to the natural man or woman that even faith will be somehow made to earn God’s favour

And though going to Christ be a short cut, yet it had rather go about, make a new way of works, than go to Christ, and by Christ, who is the Way and the Life They would rather go to the law, that was ‘the ministry of condemnation’ And papists will rather give over kingdoms, and put themselves into monasteries, lie in hair, live upon the alms of others, whip and rend their bodies, keep strictly to their canonical hours, than go to Christ, than cast off works, and betake themselves to faith If there were nothing in us against it [faith], yet the devil opposeth it more than any thing He opposed no the moral virtues of the heathen, nor doth he oppose a deluded Christian in performance of duties, but when he comes to lay hands on Christ, when he will go that way, then he musters up all the forces he can ¹³

But what is it in us that, so bound by sin, makes faith such a difficult thing? This is the question that Goodwin poses, and he explains how contrary the Gospel is to fallen reason, the conscience, and the will

Contrary to Reason

Conversion is not natural to human beings, first, because their reason is opposed to it. For Goodwin, this does not mean that there is an epistemic antithesis between faith and reason, elsewhere he argues that faith and reason are meant to work in complete harmony.¹⁴ What Goodwin is referring to, in the tradition of the reformers, is the moral depravity which makes the message of Christ and him crucified repugnant to reason. It is not that the arguments are incoherent concerning the historicity of Christ's person and work, nor that there are obvious internal inconsistencies or contradictions that render the message ludicrous. Rather, it is that the human reason, captive to the darkness in which it willingly flourishes, cannot concede human helplessness, the purely objective and external character of an imputational justification, the need for or reality of a new birth, and dependence on sustaining grace to keep one in faith.¹⁵

"For when faith comes, it deposeth reason, which before ruled as king, it subdueth it, even as reason itself subdueth sense," Goodwin asserts.¹⁶ And yet, as we have seen, Goodwin has a high view of the place of sense in apprehending truth. Similarly, reason has its important place, but in the matter of the Gospel, it is in a realm that it does not understand. It may comprehend the doctrines, but it cannot rightly apply Christ. Again, it is not reason as a faculty that is contrary to faith, but reason as captive to sin and unbelief. Thus, faith must subdue reason--not only in one's initial conversion, but throughout the Christian life. "Again, on the other side, when once a man comes to be humbled, and then should come to believe, all this reason turns head again, and useth

as much strength of objection against himself, why he should not have mercy, and tells him he must have this and this qualification before he comes to Jesus Christ ”¹⁷

Reason is forever shaking its head in unbelief at the promise, because the conviction that God should justify sinners while they are still sinful by imputing the righteousness of someone else to their charge is simply impossible for it to accept. The bad news cannot be quite so terrifying, and the good news cannot be quite so remarkable. Reason will admit any religion that helps human beings repair their moral condition, but reason judges any notion of total depravity, spiritual death, and helplessness as subversive to virtue.

Contrary to Conscience

According to Goodwin, faith is difficult because the Gospel is contrary to conscience.¹⁸ Unlike the Gospel, the Law is natural to human beings, having been written on the conscience in creation. Individuals understand good and evil and when they do what is right, their conscience confirms that this is so, when they do what is evil, they feel the accusing anguish of conscience. Therefore, conscience, if you will, speaks “legalese,” the language of the Law. It cannot understand the language of the Gospel, because it is totally unnatural and foreign to the human conscience. All that the conscience can do is inform one if he or she has obeyed the Law, it cannot absolve, it cannot heal, it cannot forgive or give the power to fulfill divine demands, Goodwin urges.

Natural conscience cannot arrive to faith, it will set you a-doing indeed, but not a-believing, it will discover other sins to you, but not this, for the Spirit must convince of unbelief. The law of works is written in conscience, but not the law of faith, and therefore men that make conscience of private prayer, and of keeping the Sabbath, and of avoiding uncleanness and adultery, and dare not omit or commit any of these, yet make no conscience of believing, nor are struck with a sense of unbelief. All the duties thou canst perform cannot beget one jot of faith. All external means cannot work faith.¹⁹

Therefore, conscience cannot bring a person to faith, on the contrary, it will only keep him or her from faith, because it will accuse and lead to despair. It knows nothing of God's forgiveness and, like reason, it must be subdued by faith.

I confess it is a good principle in man, it tells him of his sinfulness, but alas! it will never help him a whit in believing. Come to conscience, and consult with that, it sets you a-doing indeed, but it will not direct you one whit in the way of faith, but rather setteth you out of the way clean contrary. It is capable of what the law saith, for itself is but the law written in the heart naturally, and it hath an ear to hear what the law saith to a man under the law, but it is deaf to what the gospel saith, and understandeth not a word of it.²⁰

As with reason, the antagonism of the conscience to the Gospel does not disappear even after conversion, since the conscience accuses. "Conscience hath not learned its lesson from faith, it hath not gone and dipped itself in the blood of Christ by faith, for if it had, it would be quiet, and not always suggesting to a man what his sins are, so as to discourage and hinder him from believing."²¹ Therefore, the believer is never at the place where he or she can at last trust the conscience in evangelical matters.

It is important to note, too, that Goodwin simply assumes that everyone in his audience embraces the traditional Reformation distinction between Law and Gospel.

To express my meaning, and to convince you of this, you will all yield that know anything of God, that there is nothing so opposite to the gospel as the law is, unless it be subordinated to the gospel. As the strength of sin is the law, so the strength of the conscience is the law, but the strength of faith it is the gospel, and the grace of God in Christ.²²

If it can, the conscience "will turn the very gospel into a legal way. If it will comply with the knowledge of the gospel, and the knowledge of faith exceeding far, yet still it will seek to

undermine it, it will carry on the heart in a way of works, yea it will turn the duties of the gospel themselves into works, and underhand seek to be justified by faith "23 Thus, faith must dethrone the conscience, too 24

Very often the heart will be humbled by sin and determine a new course,

and will whip the heart as a runaway home to his master But how? To serve out his years, and to make up the time that is lost, and by such ways to get and obtain the favour of God, yea, to get faith itself, and then, upon conforming to what it hears the word say, whether out of the law or out of the gospel, it will take upon it to pronounce a peace, and a justification, and an absolution, for the natural office of conscience in the old covenant is to accuse, and so to excuse, and to give peace when a man doth well And thus, instead of being a witness, it will become a judge, it will take upon it to pronounce upon the heart the sentence of absolution Yea, and if that a man is enlightened thus far as to be convinced that by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified, what will conscience do? It will go and turn all the duties of the gospel, faith, and repentance, and mourning for sin, and all things else, into duties of the law, that is, the heart shall have that resting upon them which natural conscience had upon the duties of the law 25

Contrary to the Will

Goodwin insists that the Gospel is not only contrary to the conscience, but that human reason responds with incredulity How can I be so helpless and how could this method of salvation really reconcile a person to God?26 Human conscience responds to the Gospel with excuses for sinfulness, it turns promises into conditions and Gospel declarations into legal demands, insisting that it is within the powers of natural humanity to satisfy the Law's demands to which the conscience is chief witness The human will steps forward and meets the Gospel with resolution "I will do better in the future " Instead of listening, the fallen will is always speaking, instead of resting, it is working, and refuses to simply receive the truth about man's righteousness and God's 27 There is no way of getting the fallen will to accept the Gospel by nature A regenerate person has trouble enough

'If thou shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved' Yet notwithstanding, though a Christian knows all this, and though the gospel and the way of believing is most clearly and nakedly preached, the soul, when it forecasteth with itself all his own sinfulness, and unworthiness, and discouragements, will sink under the same thoughts of the impossibility of his salvation that the Jew had he will still be saying, 'Who shall climb up to heaven, to bring Christ down to this heart of mine?' or where shall I have a ladder to reach up to close with Jesus Christ? or if I be sinking down into hell, who can go and get Christ to put forth his arm to pull me out again? This, I say, is the manner of the spirits of men, even under the gospel 28

The heart, which Goodwin identifies with the will, may be moved by the image of Christ dying on the cross, it may be impressed temporarily and deeply sensitive to God's love by elaborate descriptions of the passion, but it cannot (for it will not) be persuaded that there is nothing good in itself and that it cannot repair its lost estate by making new choices. Faith itself, says Goodwin, is a gift of God and is not in human beings by nature.

Since faith is contrary to reason, conscience and will, it cannot be the same thing as assurance in Goodwin's system if the Puritan divine is to retain his Reformed commitment to *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. As we have already seen, and will see in greater detail, the practical syllogism is concerned with discerning the cause from its effects precisely by the use of reason, the conscience and the will. But this is not tantamount to justification by works, since faith is not the same thing as assurance for Goodwin. It is by separating faith and assurance that Goodwin is able to make the former dependent on nothing but the object (Christ in his saving office), while the latter is gained in degrees depending on one's exercise of these very faculties that, in their unregenerated state, stood opposed to the Gospel.

Part Two The Necessity of Faith

That faith is difficult is certain enough, but equally as sure is the necessity of faith. If believing in Christ is so difficult--indeed, impossible--why do we encourage people to do it? On what basis can they be invited to look to Christ, if even that is beyond the reach of nature? It is this consideration that leads Goodwin into repentance and its relation to saving faith. R. T. Kendall²⁹ and other discontinuity proponents³⁰ make a great deal of the *ordo salutis*, particularly the priority of repentance over faith, in the Puritans. Once more, Calvin is seen as the defender of a purely gracious, unconditional justification, while the Puritans are regarded as innovators who reversed the order.³¹ However, as we saw in the last chapter, it is essential to determine whether "repentance" is used differently by its respective interpreters. For instance, if repentance is the shattering of all native powers of fallen human nature (reason, conscience, will) by the terrifying pronouncement of the Law and the sentence of death, then Calvin himself would have this work precede faith.³² How can one flee to Christ before realizing his or her judgment by the Law? If, however, repentance is described as a process of overcoming known sins and bringing the unruly sinful passions under the ever-increasing influence of the Holy Spirit, such repentance cannot precede faith without sanctification preceding justification. In the last two chapters, we saw clearly how Goodwin, in keeping with the general Puritan consensus, will not even allow repentance to share a place with faith in the act of justifying.

However, Kendall appears to be arguing that because the Puritans place repentance before faith

in the *ordo*, they must necessarily be giving repentance a place in justifying³³ If that were true, Martin Luther would have to be a legalist, too, since he placed repentance before faith, and the entire tradition of Lutheran orthodoxy, in its official documents, concurs with this order³⁴ Goodwin speaks of repenting “in order to receiving the gospel” and “ in order to receiving the remission of sins by faith ”³⁵ But this should be seen in the light of the proper roles of Law and Gospel As the Law comes first, so repentance, as the Gospel binds up the broken, so faith follows repentance

In many other passages, Goodwin insists that faith is the root from which every other grace flows, including repentance³⁶ Like Calvin, he believes that faith is necessary even in order to recognize the legitimacy of God’s right to judge in the Law, and also like Calvin he is convinced that there is no sanctification before justification These seem to establish the parameters, not where one lines up on the *ordo salutis* Further, in coming to Christ there was the matter of self-love to be raised Here Goodwin is involving himself in a discussion that was somewhat controversial in Puritan circles Some divines insisted quite ardently that the genuine disposition in coming to Christ requires the sinner to come simply out of interest in the glory of God³⁷ The idea was that if one comes to Christ merely to be saved from hell, the person is coming with selfish motives and does not recognize that the purpose of salvation is the glory of God So one must come to Christ with God’s glory as the aim--anything else is “self-love ” And yet, Goodwin’s pastoral sensitivity and obsession with the act of faith as a direct “eyeing” of Christ crucified comes through in his assertion that God

allows self-love in coming The argument is invincible God, in ordaining your salvation did ordain it chiefly for his own glory, and yet he had infinite love to you And doth this love of

God to you stand with God's glory? Then certainly your aiming out of self-love at your own salvation stands with the glory of God in saving of you, and this is in order to believing. Therefore there is no danger in any man's seeking Jesus Christ for his own salvation, for he seeks it in Christ himself, for if thou seekest happiness in the Son of God, and life in him, thou mayest make self-love thy aim as much as thou wilt, he is your life 38

Goodwin is clearly concerned to clear away any brush that might add to the believing sinner's despair. "How do I know that I am believing with God's interests, and not my own, uppermost in mind?"³⁹ That is the question that Goodwin knows will drive the honest believer into morbid introspection and self-doubt, so he responds to accordingly. However, as we have mentioned, this was not something on which all Puritan divines agreed. It is, no doubt, with such examples in mind that Goodwin criticises the preparationism that we shall discuss in greater depth in another place.

Will not turning unto God from self-love, and loving God, and being sanctified, serve to save us under the gospel? No, read the next words: it must all be, says Christ, 'through faith that is in me.' Christ saith it from heaven, this is his commission, and he declares it, that, under the gospel, remission of sins and turning to God, forgiveness of sin and sanctification, were all through faith in him. Be convinced then, that if ever you be saved, there is a necessity that God teach you to come to the Son. You think it is an easy thing to come to Christ, and to look to him and to his name for pardon, and to go to him for forgiveness and sanctification: but let this be preached to you, and inculcated to you, to go to Christ 40

Here again we detect the christocentric focus. Coming to Christ does not mean coming to graces or means, we do not even go looking for faith. It is Christ to whom we are to look directly through the eyes of faith.

Receiving Christ

At last, in Book Three of Goodwin's volume on Justification, the author begins with the question, "How may the soul for its salvation treat with the free grace of God as declared in the

covenant?” This is an important question, in the light of everything else we have seen of importance in Goodwin in particular and the Puritan scheme in general. However, as the object is more important than the act of faith, Goodwin is unwilling to discuss the application of Christ’s work until that work itself is properly “set forth” in full view. Eschewing a merely general faith, the true believer must look to God as Merciful--but still further, to God as revealed in the person and work of Christ, and yet this still is not definite enough to be special faith in its essence. He or she must come to Christ as he is offered in the covenant of grace. Therefore, it would only be proper for Goodwin, after sketching the details of the object of faith, to explain how we are to “apply ourselves” to Christ as he is so offered.

The first requirement is “To renounce all self, or else free grace will have nothing to do with you”⁴¹. We have seen that this does not mean renouncing any self-interest in coming. What Goodwin is specifically referring to is self-righteousness, the confidence that there is something inherent in the person that can be part of the basis of the covenant. Thus, confidence in self is set in apposition to free grace. It follows Goodwin’s distinction between the Law, which is natural to the self, and the Gospel, which is wholly alien. If this is “repentance,” it must surely precede faith.

Also in his sights is the notion of free will. Many protestants, says Goodwin, will happily accept that they are justified through no merit of their own, and yet they did contribute something after all.⁴² They did accept the gift, and this was their small part in laying the basis for their conversion. If human nature cannot find some way to allow for a human cooperation in redemption itself, it will at least look for some way to contribute something of its own (and receive the credit, of course) in its application. However, the covenant appears to present evangelistic

problems at first sight. If someone declares that Christ died for the sins of every person and now invites everyone to receive the benefits of that death, surely the only thing in the way is the sinner's unwillingness to believe. But if someone declares that Christ serves as Mediator for none but the elect, but that invitation is nevertheless general and universal, the likely response is, "How can I believe a Gospel that is not meant for everyone? How can I be sure it will suffice for me?" The resolution is often found, Goodwin says, by attributing the difference between believer and unbeliever not to God's saving will but to free will.⁴³ To that degree, election and the covenantal structure that brings that particularism into every relation of the members of the Trinity, appears to present an apologetic difficulty. Goodwin responds to the concerns related to the offer of Christ in the covenant

When a poor soul sees itself lost, and comes to God, to the free grace of God, he doth not come on horseback, nor on foot neither, but he falls flat down at the throne and sovereignty of God. 'He will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, &c. Though thou hearest of other ways, of free-will grace, where God moves but leaves thee to will, yet if thou hadst ten thousand souls thou wouldst not venture on that way. Dost thou heartily say to God, Lord, I had rather go upon this way of free grace than upon that way of free-will grace, though offered to all? Oh save me this way! Lord, I have nothing to return, but I shall 'render the calves of my lips,' I shall adore thee and bless thee'⁴⁴

Goodwin believes that a redemption that is available to everyone, but intended for no one in particular, is not only unscriptural, but that it is insufficient to convince a person that it can satisfy God's justice on his or her behalf.⁴⁵ So Goodwin turns the argument on its head. Instead of particularism making it difficult ("How can I trust in it if it was not intended for everyone?"), he argues that it is a general atonement, leaving the efficacy to free will, rather than the sovereign act of the Holy Spirit, that creates anxiety.⁴⁶ The way a sinner must come to Christ, as he is offered

in the covenant, is not with the mutterings, promises, and announcements of his or her fallen reason, conscience, or will, it is to throw oneself on the mercy of a God who “has mercy on whom he will have mercy.” But this is not the normal way people approach Christ, says Goodwin

What do men do? They come with their conditions to ingratiate themselves with God when they come to treat with grace, which is to bring to grace what should ingratiate their souls to it. We use to say, God’s grace is a preventing grace, preventing what is in man, but by this way men would prevent the grace of God, and be aforehand with it. Do not go round about, but go by a right line, and venture thyself, though thou knowest not whether thou beest the person or no, and lie at God’s feet. To bring conditions whereby thy faith should be raised to free grace is not agreeable to the mind of grace. The truth is, you will find free grace will say to your souls, I will not be thus dealt withal.⁴⁷

We are reminded once more how anxious Goodwin was to distinguish faith and assurance in order to stress the unconditional promise as the object of faith. For Goodwin, confusing faith and assurance would undoubtedly lead to the confusion of the promise and conditions. He assures his readers that he has no intention of rejecting the proper use of means (“endeavours”), such as the Word, sacraments, prayer and fellowship, but “We are to use those endeavours which we have power to use, in subordination to the grace of God, that works the will and the deed.”⁴⁷ In other words, these “endeavours” may be helps to faith, but they are not to be made into conditions in addition to faith. That brings us, then, to Goodwin’s query, “How does God actually teach these saving truths to us?”⁴⁸ And here we see Goodwin’s mystical tendency come into play once more. First, God acts

to bring the knowledge you have of Christ home to your souls, to speak to your hearts. Among all the notions which you have of Christ as the object of faith, if there is but one notion of Christ set home upon the soul (I call it an intuitive beam of light of the knowledge of Christ), that is the notion the Father teaches, and all the knowledge thou hast otherwise is not the

teaching of the Father, nor will save thee. No, it is what he teaches thy soul, what he opens thy heart to receive, that is saving. And God the Father did beget his Son from eternity, so he begets that real idea of the Lord Jesus Christ in a poor believer, that never entered into the heart of any other man so that the believer can say, I have been with Christ to-day, as one said, Jesus Christ and I have been together this day, I saw him this morning. He who sees the Son, and believes on him, hath life, John vi 40, it is a real, solid, substantial sight, so that we have an understanding given anew to know the true Christ.⁴⁹

On the verge of sounding Platonic, Goodwin says that the convert “begets that *real idea* of the Lord Jesus Christ,” a real idea that is not conveyed through any other means than the direct, intuitive revelation of God the Father to the human heart.⁵⁰ This gives Goodwin an almost romantic personalism in the believer’s relationship with God and Christ. Such intuitive knowledge “is a real, solid, substantial sight,” and this is what it means to believe on Christ directly.⁵¹ Nevertheless, as we have already seen, this does not mean for Goodwin that reason is unnecessary to faith. In fact, Goodwin makes a great deal of the importance of knowledge as an element of saving faith. But Goodwin is clearly reacting against any kind of understanding of conversion that simply trades one implicit faith for another. And here one might detect the influence of continental pietism.⁵²

After God diffuses this “beam of light” concerning his Son, the sinner exercises the “first act” or “direct act” of faith. This, too, is important, since it is easy to assume that “first act” and “second act” refer to two separate acts of the same kind, when rather it is two *kinds* of faith, not two “conversions,” if you will, that Goodwin has in mind. First, upon believing, the convert “is not to consider his being already godly,” as if he had fulfilled other preparatory conditions and is now ready (and worthy) for faith. It is not conditions that the believer may have met, but the conditions satisfied by Christ, that must elicit faith. Nevertheless, since Christ did not die for

and the Holy Spirit is not applying redemption to every person,

These absolute promises do, together with all these considerations, hint to him an *it may be*, that is, that he may be one God will be merciful unto * If it must be somebody's lot (in that language the apostle speaks, Eph 1), then, says he, why not mine? So prompts the Holy Ghost often such souls, and this, though but a far-off apprehension, hath brought many a soul near, and drawn and encouraged them to come to God for their particular salvation (emphasis added) ⁵³

What must be observed in this, whether one agrees with Goodwin's logic, is that the author is convinced that the "it may be," indefinite promise is sufficient not only to elicit faith, but to calm the anxious who otherwise would be puzzling over their election. Far from leading individuals to heightened anxiety, then, Goodwin believes that this "it may be" reasoning settles a great deal more than a general atonement that does not seem to offer an *effective* satisfaction to anyone in particular. To be sure, it is weak faith that says, "If it must be somebody's lot, why not mine?", but it is faith nonetheless. It is by lowering the expectations of what constitutes true, saving faith, that Goodwin can comfort the faithful without relinquishing the particularism--and, one might say, precisely by preserving that particularism,

for these so indefinite expressions uttered in temporal promises with but an 'it may be,' and 'who can tell but that God?' &c, did yet however draw them in to seek God with a true faith for the obtaining the things promised, the faith in them answering to the utterance and tenor of the promise from God, then much more in the case of eternal salvation, if the promises thereof speak, or whisper rather, but an it may be, and who knows? should we be drawn to believe ⁵⁴

This is the "weakness of God" "He can draw a mighty whale to shore with a twine thread," and "if that faith which in his [the believer's] will he is now a-putting forth (of which next) prove true spiritual faith, and that he hold fast the beginning of his confidence unto the end, then it is an

absolute certainty that he shall be saved”⁵⁵ It would seem to follow that the believer must constantly question (a) whether his or her faith is spiritual, and not a mere temporary faith and (b) whether he or she will persevere in this faith, but Goodwin insists that “ this adventure of faith and of our souls on these it may bes for salvation, if it prove true faith in the end, though in the lowest degree, will never be unsuccessful as to that salvation we seek for”⁵⁶ To be sure, it is not the full-bodied description of faith one finds in Luther and Calvin, in which the very essence of faith is assurance, and is therefore the possession of every believer, regardless of how weak his or her faith Nevertheless, it does not create the anxieties that the earlier application can present Those who once feared that their works were not sufficient for their justification may now be wondering whether their faith is sufficient, since they do not experience assurance Thus, Goodwin insists that there are two distinct kinds of faith direct and reflex, and he is convinced that viewing assurance as part of faith’s essence confuses the act of coming with the act of reflecting on one’s having come to Christ

And come he must first in a direct line to Christ ere he can reflect upon his coming And that the aim of such an act of coming to God or Christ, or God in Christ, is purely that he may be justified, and that this is that genuine act whereupon a man is indeed justified, the example and instance of the apostles themselves, as it is alleged by one of the greatest of them in the name of himself and all the rest of them, doth manifestly declare Gal 11 ⁵⁷

This direct act of faith (recumbency) requires that we come to Christ to be justified, not to be assured that we are justified ⁵⁸ Therefore, the convert puts before his or her spiritual gaze the following syllogism 1 God is interested in justifying the ungodly, 2 I am ungodly, 3 I come

to him to be justified. This is the first act of faith, the second is 1. Those who believe are justified, 2. I believe, 3. Therefore, I am justified.⁵⁹ Goodwin does not suggest for one moment that we cannot know that we are justified, nor does he believe that such a conclusion is presumptuous, as in Rome's criticism of the possibility of attaining assurance. Goodwin is motivated by an entirely different concern: it is not a belief in the mutability and imperfection of justification, but the realization of a frequent discontinuity between reality and experience. That is why the reality of faith must be grounded on an absolute, unconditional promise that is quite distinct from the experience of faith. Thus, the distinction (prominent in Goodwin) between faith and assurance that one does not find in Calvin. In the following we observe Goodwin's rationale, common to many of the Puritans:

That which I observe for this purpose is, that his scope was to relieve even the weakest. Do but observe how, ver. 18 [Heb 6], when he describes believers, his description of them is such as includes the weakest, and such as have not attained a faith of assurance but of recumbency, although the faith of those that have assurance may be included in that description. But the faith which he describes is that which in the time past all those had already attained, and might now attain to this strong consolation, so that their strong consolation is a distinct thing from their first faith exercised at conversion, and he chooseth to decipher all believers by the acts that were at first, though continued still, that so he might be sure to include all the seed.⁶⁰

Again, one wonders if even Goodwin himself realized that he was not diverging from Calvin, so long as the distinction was between "faith" and "strong consolation," for Calvin himself made such distinctions.⁶¹ So, Goodwin continues, in this Hebrew 6 passage, it is set forth that the believer

hath a sense of present danger, and that the extremest, as a man in danger of death by reason of his own sins that come upon him, together with an apprehension that the wrath of God abideth on him in the estate he hath thereunto continued in, and so (2) flies out of, and from that condition (and that word imports a terminus a quo) or, if you will, he flies a Deo irato, from an angry God unto a God of grace, and his dominion of grace in and through Christ. And this his then

condition, and this act of flying for refuge thereupon, doth not necessarily contain in it assurance of being saved, &c , but only a hope that he may be saved from the wrath to come, even as coming to Christ imports a believing on Christ that we may be saved (as Christ speaks when he says, 'Come unto me, that ye may have life'), as also a believing on Christ that we may be justified, as the apostle's speech is, which imports not acknowledge that we are justified or that we have life⁶²

This first act of faith is merely a fleeing to the city of refuge, or as Joab flew to the horns of the altar "And all we believers may from our experience well know that the first acts of faith at conversion, and perhaps for a long while after, were but such as these, and yet we can all say, we, seeing our lost condition, have fled for refuge, all of us "63 If someone were to ask oneself, therefore, whether he or she had looked to Christ for salvation, that person could answer affirmatively the moment of that first act of faith Furthermore, this is what is implied in faith as hope "This I find to be the sense of Calvin, and of the most considerative late interpreters," also citing Cameron, Jacobus Capellus, Gomarus⁶⁴ If there is a serious departure from Calvin, Goodwin himself is not aware of it After all,

by such promises [2 Thes 2 16] as these indefinitely expressed doth the Spirit of God work a hope in the heart of the weakest believer, and causes the heart to think with itself, why may not I be the man that shall obtain? God makes a mere it may be and who knows but that God will be merciful to a man, which is a slender a hope as may be, and as a weak straw for holding the heart in a great extremity of temptation, and yet God makes it as strong to hold the heart that it shall not sink or be cast away, as the strongest cable that is It is sure, because it breaks not, snaps not asunder, as the ropes of the anchor use to do, and it is stedfast, because where it hath took hold, there it sticks, and holds the will as firm to cleave to God that he will not let him go till he bless him and assure him, when the assurance in the understanding of the party, that God will certainly save him, may be fluctuating, and in that respect his soul be cast up and down, and ready to sink, and that in the storms of doubtings to the contrary Therefore it doth not necessarily imply fulness of assurance⁶⁵

Just as Goodwin was shaped by his pastoral context, so Calvin was by his, and the fact that so

many English pastors of Calvin's generation began to tell those who lacked the experience of assurance that such experience was not necessary after all underscores this changing landscape. When Arthur Hundersam (1563-1632) turned from viewing faith as "a certain assurance" to counseling doubters to shun "a full perswasion and certaine assurance,"⁶⁶ it does not appear to have been the result of a radical theological break with the Reformed tradition, but was a pastoral response to a new existential problem.⁶⁷

All of this is simply to suggest that the differences do not constitute radical doctrinal departures, in other words, it is not a matter of theological discontinuity, but of development and progress in Reformed systematics--developments that have much to do with new pastoral contexts and meeting the challenges of polemics from Lutherans, Arminians, Socinians, and Antinomians, as well as Roman Catholics. One may conclude that Calvin's emphasis is different from the Puritan one, just as one could say that an unfinished painting by a master is different from the work when it is finished by the master's pupils. Details are filled in, liberty is taken with certain techniques, but the real question is whether the Puritans are significantly altering the original masterpiece. As we have contended, and will continue to argue, the relation conforms to the former rather than to the latter in the illustration. Whatever the discontinuities in the matter of assurance, it is clear from the evidence we have seen in Goodwin's own writings that this Westminster divine's motivations for sharply distinguishing faith and assurance had nothing to do with those attributed to the Puritans by R. T. Kendall.⁶⁸ Finally, in the matter of conversion, Goodwin distinguishes the Reformed from the Roman view. But his contrast seems to be offered simply as an opportunity to demonstrate how nearly some Protestants in his day adopt the Roman

view

Read a popish divine, and see how he will describe conversion, he will tell you that he saw his sinfulness, that he was contrite under it, humbled under the sight of it, that he feareth God, hateth sin, upon the sight of the evil of it, and begins to have good purposes. There are seven dispositions the papists have (the Council of Trent hath them), which they make conversion to consist in, and then what do they say when a man hath all these dispositions in him? Through their general faith, believing the threatenings of God, believing the goodness of God, and the evil of sin, &c, then a man hath holiness infused into him by the sacrament, when he goes to it, being thus prepared by his own dispositions, and so here is the man converted. And, my brethren, here is much of the ordinary conversion of protestants described in this many men that profess the Lord Jesus Christ, if you go down into their hearts, you shall find no treating with God in the way of his free grace, or with the Lord Jesus Christ, as the matter of their righteousness, to be justified through his blood, and to apprehend it through special faith.⁶⁹

The emphasis on conversion, at least for Goodwin, did not grow out of a new voluntarism, but out of a concern that the average conformist still possessed an essentially Roman view of conversion. Moral improvement, assisted by the infusion of sacramental graces, and a general faith. How many actually understand “free grace”? is the question Goodwin raises. They do not come to Christ as the justifier of the wicked, but to God in general, through the Church. Falling short of evangelical *notitia*, how could such people even be converted? Thus, conversion of professing Christians is no longer assumed and the process of gathering assurance, within the independent church especially, becomes increasingly central, as we shall see in chapter eleven.

Using Endeavours To Believe

Goodwin has established that faith is difficult. It is contrary to natural reason, conscience, and will. It is much easier to get a person to make amends, to promise an improved use of the means, and to increase in duties. Nevertheless, Goodwin wants to make it clear that he is not a fatalist. He does not conclude that because faith is difficult we ought to do nothing toward obtaining it. Nor are duties (reading the Scriptures, praying, making use of the sacraments) to be rejected, the

only question is whether one places his or her faith in the duties rather than in Christ. "When, therefore, we cry out against resting in duties, and shew the vanity and emptiness of all you can do to save you, or obtain Christ and God's favour, and bid men, as Luther, take heed not of their sins only, but of their good works also,"⁷⁰ this does not mean that there are no endeavors which may give greater opportunity to the gospel.

And we find Luther complaining of nothing more than this mistake and cavil which accompanied his doctrine, the chiefest of whose thoughts and breath was spent in this very point, to beat men off from carnal confidence in works (as the deepest and most bottom corruption in man's nature), and to bottom their faith immediately upon Christ, wherein he makes the power and the truth of faith consist. We profess that wicked men's best works occasionally prove their greatest sins, as Luther says of the evil world, *Tunc est pessimus cum est optimus*, they are then worst when they seem best, and the more holy in appearance they are, and the more good works they do, *eo purius diabolo serviunt*, they serve the devil more purely. But it follows not that therefore we speak against the duties themselves.⁷¹

There are many believers, says Goodwin, who would never think of the possibility of meriting God's favour by their duties and works, and yet they think that somehow these duties will become means or instruments besides faith to bring Christ to the sinner,

and therefore to think, though not to merit, yet to obtain Christ for their own performances, and so to rest in them, is as bad as the former. So though our divines have expressed themselves never so fully against works, yet men renouncing merits, their hearts have yet farther inventions of resting in works and duties, as motives to move God, they think, to give them Christ, which yet are as opposite to faith as the other, and therefore are excluded by the apostle, *Rom x 6*.⁷²

In justification, "God, in giving us Christ, and in justifying us by Christ, looks at no performances either as meriting or as moving him to do either."⁷³ We have seen how Goodwin, like Owen, was concerned with the emphasis on duties as if they merited or moved God to be favorable towards the believer. While the earlier warning about Protestants adopting, in practical

terms, a Roman view of conversion was probably aimed at Conformity, here Goodwin probably has his fellow Puritans in his sights ⁷⁴

Duties have their place, but when it comes to justification before God, faith stands alone as the instrument of receiving

Hence then it comes to pass that faith, when it goes about its proper business of laying hold upon Christ and justification through him, is careful to shut out and exclude works, it beats all duties and graces off with poles, as it were, from putting their hands to this ark, which it alone is appointed to touch and possess, and it is exceeding jealous of duties, lest they should step in and spoil her virginity, as Luther calls it, which she reserves for Christ, which is tainted and polluted, if works mingle their help with faith in this business ⁷⁵

One notices, not only in his discussion of justification, but throughout his works, a noticeable appreciation for and dependence on Luther. In fact, Goodwin goes so far as to refer affirmatively to “some of our divines, as Chemnitzius,” the Lutheran theologian known particularly for his magisterial antidote to Trent ⁷⁶ Goodwin carries forward this discussion of “endeavours” by arguing that the command to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12) refers to doubting ourselves, since “there is nothing hinders faith more than a man’s own endeavours to believe ”

Men that are convinced of the necessity of Christ, and that they must get Christ, what do they say within themselves? I will pray, and I will fast, and I will go to Christ that same ‘I will’ spoils all. They are like to swimmers that are beginning to swim, their very scrabbling and pawing in the water of themselves at first, their very eagerness is it which makes them sink, whereas if they lay but still and committed themselves to the stream, even that would carry them ⁷⁷

Here Goodwin sounds a bit like John Cotton, in the latter’s feud with the New England elders ⁷⁸ Disturbed by the despair to which the call to “endeavours” has created, Goodwin proposes passivity. But the elders in New England’s controversy did not maintain that such endeavors actually merited the gift of Christ. Rather, they were arguing that just this sort of

passivity (“committing themselves to the stream”) was mystical and failed to appreciate that God works through means⁷⁹ For both, faith was difficult, but for the elders in Massachusetts its difficulty was to be met with a struggle against the natural hurdles, while for Cotton and Goodwin it meant that one required a direct whisper

Positively, there is a place for endeavours, Goodwin allows--not in obtaining Christ, but in obtaining faith, and they must not be neglected, and at this point Goodwin stops short of flirtations with antinomian disaster If faith comes by hearing God’s Word, then surely attendance upon that duty of reading and hearing the Scriptures is essential if one wishes to come to faith The problem is that people grow so attached to the endeavors themselves, that when God opens the windows to faith, the individual shuts them and goes back to the duties and endeavors that were ostensibly designed to help the person obtain faith Goodwin writes,

When God doth draw near to thee, and begins to enlighten thee, do not go and pray after knowledge, and gifts, and the like, no, turn thy strength to faith to believe, that is the one thing necessary, and God will be as willing to help thee that way as another, for this is the great work of God⁸⁰

This is done by drawing near to God through his Word “You read the word, and you attend upon the word, and you have exhortations and promises delivered to you in the word”⁸¹

Book Four begins, therefore, with the subtitle, “Though faith be a difficult work above our power, yet God commands us to use our utmost endeavours to believe”⁸² We are “to labour to enter that rest, and labour to believe,” because there are two dangers total passivity and rigor Entering that rest depends on saving faith, but since that faith is contrary to all of our inclinations, we must constantly hear it pronounced in the Word⁸³ This is why the duties are necessary, not as conditions to be met, but as helps to faith Furthermore, Goodwin argues, “Our weakness and our

inability doth not cut the bond of our duty”⁸⁴ One must believe, even if one cannot believe. He offers the following example

We set young children to school with their hornbook at their girdles oftentimes, long before they have skill, or are capable of skill, to read them, we teach them to take up a book, to look upon the letters, to shew them thereby what it is we would have them do, and what it is we intend to bring them up to. So doth God himself with us. And we do like and approve it in little children, that they will sit at school with a book thus in their hand, rather than be still at home careless, playing with babies and rattles and the like. God requires men’s endeavours to this very purpose, that men may see their inability, which is a great lesson that furthers faith.⁸⁵

According to Goodwin, by going to church, hearing the Word, participating in the prayers, and observing the use of the sacrament, the potential convert will surely be more likely to come to saving faith than by sitting at home or at play, careless of the things of the soul. Still, these things cannot become either conditions or predicates of our justification before God. We must never place our trust in the endeavours or means, but in Christ, received by faith alone.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter how contrary faith is to the natural reason, conscience, and will, and how necessary the supernatural work of the Spirit is in bringing a person to faith in Christ. We have also seen why faith is the only instrument of justification. It is surely not as if Goodwin is unique in this insistence. Both Owen and Goodwin insisted that no other grace than faith secures a person’s justification, although the other graces are present with and produced by faith, this against those who would add any other grace, such as charity--or even repentance. Although repentance is always present alongside faith, “it is most vehemently urged [by Roman Catholics and Arminians], that it is of the same necessity unto our justification as faith is,” and for this they adduce Acts 2:38, 39 and 3:19. “Baptism in that place of the apostle, Acts 11:38,39, is joined with faith no less than

repentance, and in other places it is expressly put into the same condition. Hence, most of the ancients concluded that it was no less necessary unto salvation than faith or repentance itself. Yet never did any of them assign it the same use in justification with faith.”⁸⁶

So also, Goodwin insists that justification is “only by faith, not repentance.”⁸⁷ It is a necessary condition of the new covenant, says Owen, but not a necessary condition of justification. After all, “final perseverance is a necessary condition of the new covenant, wherefore, by this rule, it is also of justification,” but that is clearly not the case. “We allow that alone to be a condition of justification which hath an influence of causality thereunto, though it be but the causality of an instrument. This we ascribe to faith alone.” Once anything—including repentance, is made a condition of justification (or its maintenance), the door is open to everything.

And after this seeming gold hath been cast for a while into the fire of disputation, there comes out the calf of a personal, inherent righteousness, whereby men are justified before God, ‘virtute foederis evangelici,’ for as for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed unto us, it is gone into heaven, and they know not what is become of it.⁸⁸

Owen affirmed, “Protestant divines, until of late, have unanimously affirmed faith to be the instrumental cause of our justification. So it is expressed to be in many of the public confessions of their churches,” against Rome and then against the Socinians. “And of late this expression is disliked by some among ourselves, wherein they follow Episcopius, Curcellaeus, and others of that way,” with John Goodwin and Richard Baxter uppermost in his mind, no doubt.⁸⁹ Others like to toy with the phrase, setting up fine distinctions, they think the evangelical way of saying it is somehow less sophisticated. “If our design in teaching be the same with that of Scripture,—namely, to inform the minds of believers,” Owen insisted, “we must be contented sometimes to make use of such expressions as will scarce pass the ordeal of arbitrary rules and distinctions,

through the whole compass of notional and artificial sciences ”⁹⁰ Rather than speculate on the essence of faith in a rationalistic manner, Owen would rather describe its use or operation. In other words, faith is best defined by what does (looking to Christ), not by what it is in its essence ⁹¹

We must be careful in our use of the word “condition” when speaking of faith, too

For instance, it is commonly said that faith and new obedience are the condition of the new covenant, but yet, because of the ambiguous signification and various use of that term (condition), we cannot certainly understand what is intended in the assertion. If no more be intended but that God, in and by the new covenant, doth indispensably require these things of us,--that is, the restitution of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, in order unto his own glory, and our full enjoyment of all the benefits of it, it is unquestionably true, but if it be intended that they are such a condition of the covenant as to be by us performed antecedently unto the participation of any grace, mercy, or privilege of it, so as that they should be the consideration and procuring causes of them,--that they should be all of them, as some speak, the reward of our faith and obedience,--that is most false, and not only contrary to the express testimonies of Scripture, but destructive of the nature of the covenant itself ⁹²

Finally, Goodwin takes pains to argue, as Owen had, that the proper object of Christ in our justification is specific. Christ in his office as priest. Although we cannot truly receive Christ if we deny or exclude his other offices, it is his office as priest that concerns us in our justification.

Justifying faith, in that act or work of it whereby we are justified, respecteth Christ in his priestly office alone, as he was the surety of the covenant, with what he did in the discharge thereof. The consideration of his other offices is not excluded, but it is not formally comprised in the object of faith as justifying ⁹³

Goodwin agrees with Owen that “The Scripture plainly declares that faith as justifying respects the sacerdotal office and actings of Christ alone. That alone which faith respects in Christ, as unto the justification of sinners, is his ‘bearing their iniquities.’ Guilty, convinced sinners look unto him by faith, as those who were stung with ‘fiery serpents’ did the ‘brazen serpent,’--that is, as he was lifted up on the cross, John iii. 14, 15.” Our justification “is nowhere ascribed unto our receiving of him as King, Lord, or Prophet,” not in the same way that works have no place in consideration

of our justification, but in terms of the office which is proper to the act. Every true Christian embraces Christ as prophet, priest, and king, but justification has its eye on his sacerdotal ministry.⁹⁴ Here, then, Goodwin has not only affirmed his place within the line of continuity to Calvin and the other reformers. He, with a host of Reformed successors, has refined the understanding of faith, repentance, and conversion that one finds in the remarkable accomplishments of the Genevan reformer.

Notes to Chapter Seven

1 Luther argues that faith is easy only to those who pretend to possess it. "Reason can easily put on a cowl, can let the hair be cut off, can mumble, pray, and fast. Natural powers are able to do what monastic holiness does. But no monk or priest knows the art of turning the heart about and boldly relying on God's Word." Also, "Faith is not so easy a matter as pope and enthusiastic fanatics dream it is," so it is a lesson "that must constantly be practiced and rehearsed," Weimar Edition of Luther's Works, 33, 283 f and W 37, 80. Also translated and collected by Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), pp. 481-2.

2 Goodwin, 8:480.

3 *ibid*.

4 *ibid*.

5 Cf. R. T. Kendall, *op cit*, Basil Hall, "Calvin Against the English Calvinists," *op cit*.

6 Goodwin, 8:485.

7 *ibid*.

8 *ibid*.

9 8:483-8.

10 *ibid*.

11 *ibid*.

12 8:490.

13 *ibid*.

14 *ibid*.

15 *ibid*.

16 8:496.

17 8:497.

18 8:486.

19 *ibid*.

20 *ibid*.

21 *ibid*.

22 *ibid*.

- 23 *ibid*
 24 *ibid*
 25 8 497-50
 26 8 506
 27 *ibid*
 28 *ibid*
 29 R T Kendall, *op cit*, pp 5 ff
 30 Viz, M Charles Bell, *op cit*, pp 76 ff
 31 R T Kendall, *ibid*
 32 8 506-7
 33 R T Kendall, *ibid*
 34 Cf *The Book Of Concord, op cit*, Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII, On Penitence “This faith follows on our terrors, overcoming them and restoring peace to the conscience ”
 35 8 154
 36 8 73
 37 8 161
 38 8 173
 39 8 196-7
 40 *ibid*
 41 8 199
 42 *ibid*
 43 *ibid*
 44 *ibid*
 45 *ibid*
 46 *ibid*
 47 *ibid*
 48 8 162-3
 49 *ibid*
 50 *ibid*
 51 *ibid*
 52 Cf Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 172
 53 8 230 The * refers to Aug Gerard, de Just, p 1050 “Interrogo nunc credisne, O peccator, Christo? DICIS, Credo Quid credis? Gratis universa peccata tibi per ipsum posse remitti Habes quod credidisti ”
 54 8 230-33
 55 *ibid*
 56 *ibid*
 57 *ibid*
 58 For Paul, in Gal 2 16, this first faith “ was not a believing at the first dash, that they were justified, but a believing that they might be justified, and so a coming unto Christ with this aim and errand, that I may be justified as to the future” (p 233)
 59 *ibid*
 60 8 234
 61 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 4
 62 *ibid*
 63 *ibid*
 64 Goodwin, 8 242-4

65 *ibid*

66 cited by R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 91

67 After all, as we have seen, Goodwin was not even aware of any obvious disagreements with Calvin over this particular point

68 After the foregoing citations, how could one accept Kendall's position that a "crypto-Arminian definition of faith pervades Westminster theology" (p 209, *op cit*)?

69 8 301

70 8 523-5 Also, "When we speak against resting in duties, what is our scope? To bring Christ and you together, naked Christ and the naked soul, that you may not embrace clouds, but Christ in all, that you may not rest till you have Christ in your eye beyond all duties, that you may have the work of faith in your eye above all works This is all our scope, as it was Christ's, who directed them above works to believing, as that great work of God, and as it was Paul's scope, who directed them to seek it by faith, Rom ix 32 We speak not against duties as servants to attend faith, but we would marry you to Christ, and have him to be your husband, and not duties your paramours" (p 529) In another place "more are damned for things lawful than unlawful, and that they condemn themselves in what they allow, and, that more are cast away upon sands than upon rocks, viz , gross sins Luther said, *Cavendum est a peccatis, imo a bonis operibus*, we are to beware of sins, ay, and of good works too" (p 528)

71 *ibid*

72 *ibid*

73 *ibid*

74 *ibid*

75 *ibid*

76 *ibid*

77 8 532-5

78 Cf David D Hall, ed , *The Antinomian Controversy, op cit* There are three chief articles in Cotton's "Rejoynder" to the elders The first is a defense of Calvin's position on assurance as part of faith's essence In fact, the sealing of the Spirit not only does not come as a result of a separate act of assurance (as in Goodwin), but prior to faith itself, Cotton argues from Calvin and Piscator (p 79) The second is a clear distinction between Law and Gospel "In the Law, the promise is made to the Condition or qualification of the creature In the Gospel the promise is made to Christ and all the conditions are fulfilled in Christ" (p 99) The third article or argument concerned the question raised by the Elders, "Wither a Beleever ought to stirre up himselfe to act holile, before hee feele the spirit of God to act him?" (p 45) On these first two points, Cotton is in harmony with the citations we have already seen from Calvin and on the second, he is in agreement with Goodwin But on the third point, the dispute concerns the nature-grace debate Cotton was charged by the Elders with a mystical and quietistic bent In chapters nine and ten of this thesis, we shall argue that Goodwin and Cotton are in close agreement on this third emphasis

79 *ibid* , pp 202 ff John Winthrop's summary of the debate is most instructive on this point

80 Goodwin, 8 539-40

81 *ibid*

82 *ibid*

83 *ibid*

84 *ibid*

85 8 548-50

86 8 553

87 7 155

88 Owen, 8 105-6

89 *ibid* , 5 108

- 90 *ibid*
- 91 *ibid* , p 112
- 92 *ibid* , p 113
- 93 Goodwin, 8 117
- 94 8 119-121

Chapter Eight

“Make Your Calling and Election Sure” The Uneasy Tension Between the *Syllogismus Practicus* and the *Syllogismus Mysticus*

Although we have seen faith defined in terms of its essence, and more importantly, in terms of its object and acts, it is in the practical, daily life of average Christian people where Goodwin insists on laying out his scheme for attaining assurance. We must remind ourselves, whether we agree with Goodwin’s conclusions, that it is entirely appropriate for him to speak of the struggle for assurance through various endeavors without violating his doctrine of free grace. When, for instance, we read that “Assurance depends on strict and holy walking, and so may be interrupted by our remissness and negligence,”¹ we must bear in mind that he is not setting forth the conditions of justification, for that is *sola fide*; rather, it is this assurance that depends on sanctification. Goodwin insists that if assurance is part of the essence of faith, (a) justification and sanctification are confused and (b) the true believer who lacks assurance will be convinced that he or she is not truly exercising saving faith and would despair. Therefore, Goodwin sets forth several propositions for us to consider in this matter of obtaining assurance once one has already received Christ and his justification.

Faith Is Less Than Full Assurance, More Than Assent

For Goodwin, faith may not be a “full persuasion” of one’s own interest in redemption, nevertheless, it is not mere assent either.² Right or wrong, Goodwin is motivated by the pastoral concern

to keep such as have their hearts drawn to Christ and upheld to believe, though without such prevailing assurance, from such discouraging thoughts, as therefore to think their estates accursed, and that they cannot be in the estate of grace, because they want such a work. And also my end is to keep off those that have assurance superadded to faith, from censuring the present condition of many of their brethren, as if they were without grace, because they want such assurance.³

Goodwin sets out with proofs that assurance is not part of faith's essence. First, justification has been pronounced to people who lacked assurance (Mt 5:3), he says. Was the publican, "who went home justified" rather than the Pharisee, justified after or even upon his being assured? Likewise, when Abraham "believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness," nothing is said of the patriarch *knowing* that he had believed God and that God had assured him of an interest in the promise. Furthermore, if a believer may fall into gross sins, then so also gross doubts. Here Goodwin reiterates the Puritan conviction that assurance depends on "strict and holy walking."⁴ Goodwin is not asserting this in order to deprive people of what is theirs by grace, he is observing an obvious fact of Christian experience. Many people lack a "full assurance," and that is sometimes due to their sins and failure to make proper use of the means. But this is the rationale for the separation of faith and assurance and this is why, we maintain, Goodwin was more intent even than many other Puritans in making the sharp distinction. Otherwise, one might conclude that the act of faith itself depends on strict and holy walking, and that would be catastrophic, as we have seen in the previous chapters.

Underscoring Goodwin's belief that faith was a mere receiving, he favors the phrase "rolling himself onto God" to make the point.⁵ Faith itself is simple trust, assurance, the conqueror's crown. The goal is to make justifying faith to consist in nothing but casting oneself on Christ. Goodwin expresses the distinction clearly in the following manner: "That I should know I am justified is not necessary to God's justifying of me, but the intent of it is for my comfort, that I

may have peace with God in my conscience....So then the first act of faith is casting myself on Christ for justification and not believing that I am justified.”⁶

Goodwin is aware of the objections: (1) Isn't this mere assent? No, for

when my heart is, by the belief of the general, drawn in to Christ in particular, to rest on him for my own salvation; when I assent not only as a witness to a will, but come in as a party, as a legatee, put in for a share, that Christ and all his benefits may be mine, and so give myself up to him, when special mercy to me is the aim of my faith...And this, as it is more than papists faith, and is indeed the life of faith, so also is it less than assurance, which is rather a verbal challenging him as mine than a real appropriation...In the instance of the man in the Gospel that sold all he had to buy the pearl, that bargain of his made the pearl his, and did appropriate it to him, for thereby he bought it, and it was not a persuasion of its being his made it first his, but a selling all that it might be his, though that persuasion came in afterwards.⁷

Furthermore, “there is a twofold application, the one is real, which makes a thing mine; the other is axiomatic, whereby I say it is mine; or, if you will, the one is an apprehension of the understanding, when I judge and discern, and can challenge this as mine; the other is in the will, when I choose it for my portion, cleave to it as mine, take it to be mine.”⁸ But the placement of assurance within the act of faith itself requires faith to be almost solely an act of the understanding. So, for Goodwin, the “first act” of faith (recumbency) is primarily an act of the will; the “second act” (assurance) an act of the understanding, although, as we have already seen in the discussion of faith's essence, Goodwin describes this first act of recumbency chiefly in terms of persuasion and passive reception.⁹ To highlight the activity of the will in the exercise of faith is not necessarily to succumb to a “voluntarism” that negates the receptive character of faith. After all, Goodwin himself associates this act of the will as meaning, “I cleave to it as mine, take it to be mine,” in the quote above. The will merely receives what God offers in the Gospel. Still less is it necessarily introspective. We have seen how Goodwin's view of faith is entirely concentrated on

“Christ set forth,” extrinsic to the believer. Similarly, Goodwin states, “And in the first place, it must be granted that there is both an assurance of faith in the understanding, and in the will a firm adhering to the things revealed in the promises”¹⁰. One must be assured of God’s mercy in Christ for sinners in order to be saved, but not in his mercy in Christ for me. It is due to his disdain for excessive introspection that Goodwin makes the first act of faith a mere “adherence” to Christ as justifier of the wicked.

And thus you see, as to the matter of those absolute promises, there is both an assurance in the understanding, and a firmness of adherency in the will, even in him that at present wants sight and assurance of the face and favour of God, which was the case of the psalmist at that time [Ps 130], and therefore the same may be in any that wants that assurance. And these two acts are (though in greater or lesser degree) common unto all believers.¹¹

Here Goodwin recognizes that *both* the assurance in the understanding *and* the firmness of adherency in the will are present even in the one lacking “full assurance.” If these two acts, “though in greater or lesser degree,” are “common unto all believers,” is the gap between Calvin and Goodwin as wide as is often suspected? The difference between the two acts of faith is made plain

inasmuch as faith in the understanding of him that is an adherent only comes short in this, that he doth not as yet *firmly and prevailingly over his doubts* believe that himself is the individual person intended by God in the promises, concerning which the other is fully satisfied, and accordingly can and doth with assurance apply those promises to himself, that they are his, &c (emphasis added)¹²

Goodwin is also ready for the objection that insists,

I must believe Christ is mine ere my will can thus apply him, as I must believe meat is mine ere I eat it, and that clothes are mine ere I put them on. Ans. I answer, If the condition of making meat mine be to eat it, and if a father offers a child a suit, saying, it shall be his if he will wear it, then he must eat that meat first, and put those clothes on, that they may become his, and so

it is here ¹³

Goodwin has no interest in removing assurance or dangling it above the believer as a reward for obedience, he simply does not want believers to give up on the hope of being saved because they do not have assurance. Looking to Christ precedes the assurance that Christ is mine, just as pleasure follows the sight of something beautiful or comfort follows the reception of a well-prepared meal. This view of assurance, Goodwin is convinced, glorifies God's grace more in that the sinner acknowledges the freedom of God's grace "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Finally, this kind of assurance survives and grows through trial "A servant that is in health may do more work than one that is sick, and yet what a sick servant doth is as much accepted, because it is a trial of his faithfulness, though it be less."¹⁴

Assurance Is Possible

As there is little value to being happy unless one understands or comprehends one's condition of happiness, so there is little value to being justified unless one can understand that to be true in one's own particular case, at least to some extent, even though, of course, such understanding or comprehension is not necessary to the fact.¹⁵ Assurance is surely something to be sought, so long as one does not confuse it with the search for faith itself.

Assurance is thought by natural reason to obstruct the path to holiness, but Goodwin argues that "When a man knows not but out of his own mouth he may be condemned, he is loath to confess, but when pardon comes, he cares not what he lays open."¹⁶ Assurance of pardon frees believers to confess their sins, confident of remission. Further, it increases love "As we cannot love one heartily, whom we apprehend to be an irreconcilable enemy, so we cannot love one perfectly whom we do not know to be a friend, therefore, as full joy ariseth out of assurance of God's love,

o perfect love ariseth only thence ”¹⁷ After all, God wants service from love, not from slavish fear So far is Goodwin from discouraging assurance that he notes that it sometimes comes to converts on the first day

Christ therefore tells many new converts on the first day, that their sins were forgiven, and he tells this to those of ordinary rank, not disciples and apostles only so he told that palsy man, Mat x 2, so he said to Mary, who was lately a sinner, a known sinner, Luke vii 37, 39 but the Church of Rome teacheth her children to know their mother, but to doubt of their father, which is a sign they are bastards, and she a strumpet ¹⁸

How Assurance May Be Obtained

In the Antinomian Controversy in New England, Cotton said that seeking assurance of justification through sanctification is “to go on in a Covenant of works ”¹⁹ Cotton rejected the possibility that one can build the foundation for assurance on sanctification, following Calvin ²⁰ Yet, evidences can be allowed As Michael Jenkins correctly notes, “Cotton echoed Calvin when he said that the best way to lead a person to assurance and to comfort is not to direct them [sic] to ‘the working of their own sanctification within them’ but to help them ‘to discover the face of Christ which is now hid from them ’”²¹ Calvin himself declared, “But if we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves, and not even in God the Father, if we conceive of him as severed from his Son ”²² How then may assurance be obtained, if the experience of it is lacking?

Like Calvin, Goodwin ties the assurance of the believer to the witness of the Spirit, and even though we have seen Goodwin employ very personal language in referring to this union, the witness of the Spirit is more objective than mystical or subjective Therein, “God’s Spirit accompanies

his word with a divine light and authority”²³ Word and Spirit cannot be separated in this internal witness. Many will hear this appeal to the internal witness and conclude that this is too subjective for a reliable evidence of assurance.

Yea, but they object, sixthly, that there are many enthusiasms, and Satan joins with hypocrites’ hearts, and deludes them, and so a man shall not be able to know the Spirit’s witness from that of his great deceiver. Ans. The apostle tells us, [1 Jn] chap v ver 6, ‘It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.’ That is, did he not give an infallible testimony, he were not it to be reckoned a witness, and if he is a witness, then he is so as to persuade men to whom he gives witness, for why else is he said to witness?²⁴

The work of the Spirit is, then, in a very real sense for Goodwin in this connection objective rather than subjective. The infallible witness of the Spirit within the soul is just as sure as the infallible witness of the Word external to it, since they both rely on each other for the success of their witness. Naturally, Goodwin turns to 1 John 5:7, 9, in outlining the “three witnesses in heaven, and three witnesses on earth,” and their respective testimony.²⁵ “First, By blood I understand the work of justification on a poor sinner”, (2) “Secondly, By water I understand sanctification, both in the habits and fruits of it”, (3) “Now then, the third witness, the Spirit, is the Holy Ghost, who comes down from heaven and dwells here on earth in the heart of a believer, and so takes part with him, and joins his witness to these other two, his testimony being the greatest, the clearest of all the rest.”²⁶ So this internal witness seems to be given a central role in assurance, even above the Word, sacraments, and sanctification, in the matter of assurance, though not in justification itself.

But how do these witnesses testify in such a way as to secure assurance? First, since they come

through the proper door (faith), the believer “is enabled to see grace so free, so rich, that nothing in himself can hinder it, as nothing in himself can further it,” and this is supported by the sacraments, “baptism being the seal of righteousness”²⁷ Second, the practical syllogism comes into play, but notice Goodwin’s warning in employing it

Faith having once rightly and alone closed with Christ’s blood to justify the believer, and having ascribed all to it, then water may come in as a witness to justify that faith Now the ordinary error is, that men neglect the blood of Christ, and the work of faith, and the sprinkling of it on their consciences for justification, and the evidence thereof, and betake themselves wholly to water, ere they have closed with his blood They would see themselves sanctified ere they have closed with justification But if a man hath been guided once aright in the work of faith, and his heart pitched right for justification, to seek it alone in the blood, then water comes fitly in as a witness, and is to be listened unto, but till then, the danger is, lest men should have that recourse to water which they should have to the blood of Christ, and rest therein for justification²⁸

We shall discuss the role of the sacraments in Goodwin’s view of assurance, but here it is worth mentioning, since he believed that, when one’s back was up against the wall and struggling for assurance, it was the sacraments that offered a significant objective witness “Every man in the world that hears of the gospel, is bound indeed to receive the sacraments, of baptism first, and then the Lord’s supper”²⁹ Gaining and strengthening assurance is the source of energy for every facet of the Christian life and by bringing all of these witnesses together, in a cacophony of agreement for our assurance, the believer may hope for and expect to experience it

This, therefore, I will set up as my mark, I will never pray but I will seek this in a more eminent manner, I will never receive the Lord’s Supper but I will put this in, that the Lord would come in to bestow it on me, I will listen to all the witnesses I find whispering to my heart by the Spirit, or by the promises suggested to me, and that is this, of what it is that assurance be attained in this life, as far as this Epistle of John holds it forth³⁰

Finally, Goodwin counsels in seeking assurance, one would do well to meditate on the

believer's union with Christ. This is not a call to a merely devotional exercise, but is bound up with the believer's growing understanding from the Word concerning this important truth. For instance, it is important to realize that this union is not essential or ontological.

It is not a burning up of the flesh, as some speak, or that the creature ceaseth to be a creature, and is one with the Creator, God with God. No, that is an higher union than Jesus Christ himself had in the flesh, by whom our redemption was purchased and by virtue of which it was called the blood of God, and the righteousness of God (which can be said of no man in the world).³¹

The believer's union with Christ links the person not only to his righteousness by imputation as well as impartation, it also links him or her to his heavenly intercession. This current aspect of Christ's mediation, for Goodwin, is of supreme importance. Very often, we think of the objective work of Christ in history, but its sheer objectivity makes it difficult to take personally. As a result, many are afraid of casting their anchor in a false hope, but Goodwin offers the following counsel:

We have assurance in this, that Christ being a righteous advocate, he will never be the patron of a bad cause, and therefore since he pleads ours, we may be sure to prosper in it. And he is not only a righteous advocate, but his own very righteousness pleads for us, and pleads not before a judge, but a Father.³²

Navigating between the Scylla and Charybdis of legalism and antinomianism, Goodwin warns against the latter's notion of "eternal justification," which renders any act of faith on man's part irrelevant.³³ Not only is the believer's union with Christ and his heavenly intercession comforting, the "axiomatological" (reflex) act of faith is increased by consideration of the believer's election in Christ.³⁴ In fact, telling people to embrace indefinite promises, apart from an explanation of election and particular redemption, will be a hindrance. The general, indefinite

promises were sufficient for the apostles and Jesus Christ himself, says Goodwin, furthermore, it is they who insist that Christ came to save his people and that he had been sent on a mission by the Father to save a particular people³⁵ Therefore, such things should be explained to the faithful, otherwise they will attempt to find something inherent in themselves--not only for their assurance, but in the act of recumbency itself

At the end of the day,

Perhaps the soul cannot say, I have a portion in it, but yet it can say, I come to him to have it so, 1 Pet 1:7 No cordial is so precious as this blood of Christ to justify the soul, and though the soul cannot say, I have part in this righteousness, yet it doth say, if I had all the righteousness of men and angels, I would account it dog's-meat, fling it away that I might have his righteousness The soul falls down aghast at this righteousness in an admiration Oh, how glorious is this righteousness! So that although the soul knows not of its interest in it, but remains in doubts, yet it hath the highest value of it, and stands adoring, as John did, when he said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world,' John 1:29 In seeing this Jesus that hath sufficiency to take away sin, the soul stands aghast, and worships him, and though it doth not fall down on its knees, yet adores him in its heart³⁶

Goodwin refers to John 5:24 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life," concluding, "And this is a sign Jesus Christ hath satisfied for thee, and makes application to the Father for thee"³⁷ Goodwin allows that Jesus himself is offering a syllogism of sorts But then why should I trust in God, since I may not be elect? Goodwin replies, "If faith answers the promise, it is certainly true saving faith"³⁸ Surely this is capable of being used syllogistically, too "Saving faith answers the promise But I answered the promise Therefore, I have exercised saving faith"³⁹ The promise is not offered to the elect or every man, but is held out for all Christ died for sinners, look to him, you sinners, and you shall be justified One is not justified by believing that Christ died for him in particular or that he is one of the

elect, but by looking to Christ. But once more Goodwin's frustration at the abuses of the practical syllogism comes through in his advice: "To him to whom the gathering must be, to him you must come, as members to a head, and as lost creatures to a Saviour. Do not come to this and that sign, and think you have none of Christ, because you cannot find them, but come to him, and dwell with him, and remain with him, day and night."⁴⁰ This is precisely the counsel that Calvin gives in the *Institutes*, as we have seen. Everything Goodwin says, in pastoral terms, is determined by this focal-point throughout his work on going directly to Christ. While we may seek assurance, we should always remember that we are *simul iustus et peccator* and that assurance, like growth in holiness, is a slow process. Pardon comes in an instant, but assurance over a lifetime.

But though this is attainable, yet Christians are a-growing up to it ordinarily, but by degrees, for, poor creatures as we are, we learn Christ by piece and piece, as when we look upon the moon through a telescope, it appears so big, and vastly great, beyond what we can take in at once, that we must travel over it with our eyes, first taking a view of one part, and then removing the glass to another, and see, perhaps, but a quarter of it at once.⁴¹

Law, Gospel, and the Christian Conscience

Goodwin was convinced, as we see below, that the redeemed conscience is still prone to rely on imperatives rather than on indicatives. R. T. Kendall urges us to accept the thesis that Beza led the Reformed tradition away from the Reformation itself by requiring the preaching of the Law before the preaching of the Gospel.⁴² But is this not a remarkable assertion, given the fact that the distinction between Law and Gospel is the very hermeneutic that guided the Lutheran Reformation?⁴³ If there is a departure into legalism, it must have begun with Luther and Melancthon, but it is this magisterial Reformation that Kendall commends to us in contrast to

Puritanism Although Calvin and the Reformed system generally are uncomfortable with the sharp antithesis when the matter of justification is not in view, Beza captured the essence of the reformers' concern in his *Confessio* (1558), where the Word is divided "into two principal parts or kinds the one is called the 'Law,' the other the 'Gospel'" Furthermore, "Ignorance of this distinction between Law and Gospel is one of the principal sources of the abuses which corrupted and still corrupt Christianity"⁴⁴ In Nowell's Catechism, Law and Gospel are clearly distinguished⁴⁵ For the ungodly, the chief use is didactic, for the believer, the third use (i.e., to reveal God's will for the believer's life) is most important, but even then the believer is sent back to Christ when he sins⁴⁶ Are good works useless because they do not justify? No "For they serve both to the profit of our neighbor and to the glory of God, and they do, as by certain testimonies, assure us of God's goodwill toward us, and of our love again to God-ward, and of our faith, and so consequently of our salvation"⁴⁷ To say that good works "assure us of God's goodwill toward us" is far from using them as the foundation for that assurance⁴⁸

To be sure, there is much in the average Puritan sermon that could be regarded as "legal" preaching, but that was calculated to drive people to despair of their "holiness," and produce "humiliation" But such preaching was normally followed by the preaching of the Gospel in all of its beauty and freedom John Preston offers us a good example of such preaching, beginning with the most rigorous preaching of the Law

If a man stand in awe of the Lord, he would be afraid of every sin, he would be afraid of vain thoughts, of being vain in his speeches, and of giving way to the least wickedness, afraid of every inordinate affection, he would be afraid how he spent the time from morning till night, and how to give an account thereof, afraid of recreations, lest he should sleep too much, or sleep too little I beseech you, therefore, that are in the covenant with the Lord, and nearest to him, that know yourselves to be within the covenant to consider this, and learn to fear⁴⁹

Yet, God realizes we are but flesh, and Preston turns to the proclamation of the Gospel. In spite of our sins, “mercies are continued and judgements withheld”⁵⁰. The believer is, therefore, not to be discouraged. “One word from the Lord Jesus tames them all, only bring faith with thee”⁵¹. He says that the reason Samuel said, “Fear not ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord,” was because

that which often keeps men off from the Lord is discouragement. The main thing that keeps many off, is, men do not think God so ready to receive and pardon them. Now therefore, says Samuel, you are his people and the Lord cannot forsake his own. God loves for no merits, which should teach us to look out of ourselves, less into our hearts in this case, and more to the attributes of God. For look, how much larger God’s heart is than a man’s, so much larger are his mercies”⁵².

The active obedience of Christ is necessary for comfort. “And when a man thus sees his particular sores and diseases, and something in Christ’s righteousness to answer them all, --as Christ’s patience to answer his impatience, Christ’s love to stand for his hatred, Christ’s holiness of nature to cover his uncleanness,--he will then begin to esteem every jewel in that cabinet, for he knows he could not spare one part of that righteousness”⁵³. Those who had been made sensitive to their sins in the first part of the sermon are offered the sweetest hope in the Gospel, Preston insists

Whereas you object that you fall into the same sins again and again, I answer, You may fall again and again, and into great sins, for which you have been, soundly humbled. Why should we speak that which the Scripture doth not? only take it with this caution--see that you are constantly warring against your sins, as Israel with the Amalekites, so as never to cease to look upon them but as your greatest enemies, and never be reconciled though you be foiled again and again. It is utterly a fault among you to weaken your assurance by your daily slippings and failings, and Satan labours for that above all other, for then, when your assurance and hope are gone, you walk unevenly, and are as a ship that hath lost her anchor or is without a rudder”⁵⁴.

The Puritan doctrine can, of course, be employed in a morbidly introspective manner and prove that famous and popular, if ill-informed, caricature by H L Mencken that a Puritan is someone who is afraid that somewhere in the world someone is enjoying himself⁵⁵ But it was Goodwin who led a group to gather Preston's writings for a posthumous publishing venture and Owen certainly concurred with such preaching, declaring, "This is the mystery of the gospel in the blood of Christ, that those who sin every day should have peace with God all their days Forgiveness in the blood of Christ doth not only take guilt from the soul, but trouble also from the conscience " This recognition of the Law and Gospel keeps us from either antinomianism or legalism "Between these two extremes of absolute perfection and total apostasy lies the large field of believers' obedience and walking with God "⁵⁶ In short, "Sin and grace are the principal subjects of the whole Scripture, of the whole revelation of the will of God to mankind "⁵⁷

But not all of the preaching was like this Indeed, the high Calvinists were reacting against some of the worst examples of that which has now become the most widespread caricature of the movement Certainly some of the documents suggest a legalistic impulse among some of the Puritans⁵⁸ Nevertheless, that which the editor of John Owen's works observes of that towering figure of English Puritanism can be said of the movement generally

The directions which our author gives in order to subdue the power of internal corruption are at the farthest remove from all the arts and practices of a hollow asceticism There is no trace in this work of the morbid and dreamy tone of kindred treatises, which have emerged from a life of cloistered seclusion The reader is made to feel, above all things, that the only cross on which he can nail his every lust to its utter destruction, is, not the devices of a self-inflicted maceration, but the tree on which Christ hung, made a curse for us "⁵⁹

In fact, the motives for Owen's masterful treatment of sin and temptation seem to have paralleled Goodwin's, in his treatise, *Christ Set Forth*. Owen explains why he wrote his treatise

This was seconded by an observation of some men's dangerous mistakes, who of late days have taken upon them to give directions for the mortification of sin, who, being unacquainted with the mystery of the gospel and the efficacy of the death of Christ, have anew imposed the yoke of a self-wrought-out mortification on the necks of their disciples, which neither they nor their forefathers were ever able to bear.⁶⁰

And the product is inevitable and abundantly evidenced "superstition, self-righteousness, and anxiety of conscience in them who take up the burden which is so bound for them." In short, Owen wishes to remind them that they are in a "covenant of grace."⁶¹ A clear distinction, then, between Law and Gospel is indispensable for the Christian conscience. When Paul, in Philippians 3, "accounts all the righteousness and conformity to the law but dung and dross," Goodwin notes that "our divines interpret rightly of his righteousness and works done after conversion as well as before."⁶² As we have seen earlier, Goodwin is acutely aware of the habit many Christians have of going directly to Christ for their justification, but then resting in their duties after they are converted. Somehow, they have forgotten that they must trust only in Christ even after conversion, since even their best works are sinful.⁶³

Following Calvin, Goodwin reminds us that "The law is good, so long as it is not put in competition with the gospel."⁶⁴ The Law is not the believer's enemy, except in relation to the question of justification before God. If one seeks life, health, power, or acquittal from the Law, he or she will only discover a consuming fire. The Law cannot even offer any empowerment to a Christian after conversion, although it still contains God's righteous will.

Yea, we say that the way to increase in holiness is to increase in faith 2 Peter iii 18, 'Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ' This is the root, water that, and you will be fruitful Now [Christ] is presented not as justification only, but as sanctification also, therefore he that takes Christ as he is given, takes Christ for both, and Christ is made both, and he doth turn to him as well as believe in him in that very taking him Therefore faith is receiving Christ as a Lord, and repentance is walking in him, Col ii 6, and therefore repentance is called 'a turning to Christ,' 1 Peter ii 25 As when a man takes a place on him, it is supposed he subjects himself to the conditions and work required in it As when a man marries a wife, it is supposed he will love her, so when a man receives Christ as the truth is in him, it is supposed he is to obey him, therefore, it is called 'the obedience of faith,' for all obedience is spoken in that one word, John vi 38 ⁶⁵

Goodwin's emphasis on the current intercession of Christ is further illustrated by the title of his treatise, *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Toward Sinners* Once more, the trinitarian theme is involved,⁶⁶ but it is Christ who represents believers before the Father Goodwin goes to great lengths to illustrate Christ's tenderness in dealing with believers, in spite of their sin and doubt ⁶⁷ Even acts of sin and unfaithfulness can be an opportunity for God's heart to be shown, "in that your very sins move him to pity more than to anger" Goodwin explains

He suffers with us under our infirmities, and by infirmities are meant sins, as well as other miseries, as was proved, whilst therefore you look on them as infirmities, as God here looks upon them, and speaks of them in his own, and as your disease, and complain to Christ of them, and do cry out, 'O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me?', so long fear not Christ he takes part with you, and is so far from being provoked against you, as all his anger is turned upon your sin to ruin it, yea, his pity is increased the more towards you, even as the heart of a father is to a child that hath some loathsome disease, or as one is to a member of his body that hath the leprosy, he hates not the member, for it is his flesh, but the disease, and that provokes him to pity the part affected the more What shall not make for us, when our sins, that are both against Christ and us, shall be turned as motives to him to pity us all the more⁶⁸

And yet, "You know not by sin what blows you give the heart of Christ"⁶⁹ It is the guilt for having committed great sins even after conversion that makes many lack assurance, and yet Goodwin reminds them of the indissoluble bond between the offices of Christ ⁷⁰ To say that Christ is redeemer is to say that he is also lord, but this too is good news, leading Goodwin to

query, "Are we afraid of being happy too soon in being married to him?"⁷¹ Nevertheless, the liberating word of the Gospel, so essential even for the constant refreshment of the believer seeking ever-greater assurance, does not set the believer free in order to continue in rebellion

Christ and the reign of one sin, they cannot stand together Kings may pardon traitors, but they cannot change their hearts, but Christ pardons none he doth not make new creatures, and 'all old things pass away,' because he makes them friends, favourites to live with and delight in, and if men 'put on Christ, and have learned him, as the truth is in Jesus, they put off as concerning the former conversation the old man, with the deceitful lusts,' Eph iv 21,22, and he ceaseth from sin, that is, from the course of any known sin They are the apostle's own words which shall judge us, and if we should expect salvation from him upon any other terms, we are deceived, for Christ is 'the author of salvation to them only that obey him,' Heb v 9 ⁷²

And here, Goodwin is careful to warn his readers not to sin against knowledge Adopting Aristotle's distinction between three classes of sins (ignorance, passion, knowledge), Goodwin insists that " unless a man maintaineth a constant fight against [a sin against knowledge], he hateth it, confesseth it, forsaketh it, he cannot have mercy "⁷³ In other words, one cannot come to Christ as priest for justification if he or she is deliberately rejecting him as prophet and king This is precisely what one does when one comes to God to receive pardon, but determines to live as he or she pleases Goodwin is not saying that one must first stop committing particular sins before that person can be justified, for we have already seen how vociferously he criticises that notion But he is saying that the rebel puts down his sword when he is reconciled to his enemy, and a sinner who comes to God cannot expect forgiveness while planning a coup d'etat Thus, a sin that is due to ignorance or passion is sinful, but a sin against knowledge--unless it is confessed and dealt with, is utterly destructive of faith Sins against knowledge are not simply "known sins"

Therefore let not poor souls mistake me, as if I meant throughout this discourse of all sins

which are known to be sins, but I mean such sins as are committed against knowledge, that is, when knowledge comes and examines a sin in or before the committing of it, brings it to the law, contests against it, condemns it, and yet a man approveth it, and consenteth to it, when a duty and a sin are brought before knowledge, as Barabbas and Christ afore Pilate, and thy knowledge doth again and again tell thee such a sin is a great sin, and ought to be crucified, and yet thou criest, let it go, and so for the duty, it tells thee again and again it ought to be submitted unto, and yet thou omittest it, and committest the sin, choosest Barabbas rather than Christ these are sins against knowledge⁷⁴

The person who struggles with a particular sin, knowing that it is wrong, but falling into it repeatedly, is not in mind here. Goodwin is referring to the person who knows that a particular activity is sinful, and yet concludes that this is something to which the person is entitled. But even as serious as sins against knowledge are, they too are pardonable.⁷⁵ Is it possible for a true believer to even sin against “a strong impulse of conscience”? Yes indeed, says Goodwin, as in the cases of Peter and David.⁷⁶ In fact, why would Paul have instructed the Galatians not to grieve the Holy Spirit unless it were possible for a believer to sin “against a strong, smiting, and checking direction of sanctifying light and of the Spirit of God moving to the contrary”?⁷⁷

These statements are profoundly pastoral, as Goodwin leaps on instances believers often used (or heard used) in their own particular case, in order to drive them by “legal preaching” to “evangelical obedience.”⁷⁸ Goodwin insists that this cannot be done, and demonstrates by well-known biblical instances how it is possible for genuine believers to fall into gross sins. Assurance may be lost due to such failures, but never faith itself.⁷⁹

As a believer matures, the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her life can become a great source of assurance. The irony in the Christian life, however, is that “the holier a man is, the more he discerns and knows his sins,”⁸⁰ so it is difficult to chart one’s progress or determine one’s assurance entirely on the basis of sanctification. This is why Goodwin returns repeatedly to the

theme of the Gospel,

that part of the word which in strict sense reveals the doctrine of God's free grace, the work of Christ's redemption, and the riches of it, justification, and sanctification, and the secrets hereof, for this is the gospel. And for the ministers, they might add more beauty to their own feet, and souls to God, if in their speculations and preachings they did not, as the Pharisees of old did in their practice neglect the great things of the gospel forementioned and tithed mint and cummin, pick truths of less moment, bolt and sift them to the bran, but leave the other unsearched into and ununsisted on.⁸¹

Goodwin is so convinced of the Gospel's power that he can see no other source of energy for living the Christian life.⁸² We have seen how concerned Goodwin is that believers will trust in Christ for justification, but then move on in the Christian life to trust their growth as the ground upon which God now finds them acceptable. In order to recognize that the Gospel is the only source of energy in the Christian life, Goodwin emphasizes *simul iustus et peccator* even in the Christian life.

What an amazing wonder is it that a man should be ungodly at the same time that he is justified, and at the same time that he is sanctified too. The Scripture is clear for this, Rom iv 5 Abraham, not only at his first conversion, but a long time afterward, yea, in his whole life, looked upon himself as a person ungodly, and to be justified by God as ungodly, considered in himself. So if you come to conversion, there is no man that truly turns to God, but he turns freely to him, it is the freest act that ever man did, or else he will never be saved, yet notwithstanding, though it hath the highest freedom in it, it is wrought in him by an almighty power, even the same power that raised up Christ from death to life. Here is the highest freedom of will, and God's everlasting purpose and power mixed together.⁸³

In fact, Goodwin addresses the "papists" with the announcement, "I will give you a greater contradiction in appearance to human reason: a man is ungodly and godly, a sinner and justified at the same time." Even the purest graces of sanctification "can never come to justify," Goodwin says, and that is as true after conversion as before.⁸⁴ And yet, this does not lead to antinomianism, since Goodwin recognizes the reality of indwelling sin: "I am perfectly sanctified, and perfectly holy, considered in him, and I was crucified with him, yea, but the

remainders of corruption are still. All men would desire to be more glorified than they are here, yet they are perfectly glorified in Christ, considered in him. ”85

In order to come to Christ properly, then, one must realize from the start that he or she will never possess an inherent righteousness sufficient to secure divine favour. All of the believer’s righteousness, throughout his or her life, is “alien,” and “whenever a man puts forth an act of faith for justification and comes to Christ for it, he should look upon himself as an ungodly person, and to be so in himself forever. This is made the very genius and the spirit of faith.”86 In Christ, we are forever godly, in ourselves, ungodly throughout the course of this life. This is why we cannot see grace and forgiveness as something that is only for the convert, the Gospel is for the Christian as well, and it must be heard regularly in order to drive the conscience back into its place. The introspection for which Goodwin calls is to consider how zealously God sought the sinner while he or she was impenitent, as evidence of the distance to which he will continue to run in order to make good on his promise.87 Whenever the believer is confronted with doubts, normally engendered by the Law, he or she must remember that the Law can no longer threaten those who are in Christ. Goodwin understands the psychology of a doubting Christian with profound pastoral insight.

But they think that because they have so long provoked him, that now he may have sworn against them in his wrath, and that he cannot find in his heart to forgive such a wretch, though he may otherwise pardon as much as all men and angels putting their stock of mercies together, and making up one great purse of mercy, as would be sufficient to extend to forgive and discharge great debts. Oh but, says God, measure not my thoughts in pardoning either by the evil in your thoughts, or by your ways in sinning, nor yet measure them by what the thoughts and ways of yourselves, men or angels, have or can have to forgive withal! My ways of mercy are both above your ways of sinning, and they also exceed all the thoughts of mercy which the best natured of you can have in pardoning others.88

For those who struggle with God's forgiveness, assurance will be difficult, but not impossible. Goodwin suggests meditating on texts that set forth God's mercy. Any one of the promises can become a river that can lead us to the ocean of God's free mercy.⁸⁹ And now, the promises should not be merely generally applied ("It may be so that I am one for whom Christ died"), but *pro me*.⁹⁰

Therefore, the believer is not to assume that the regenerate conscience is capable of rendering safe verdicts. "Conscience, at best, is but a legal preacher," Goodwin declares, in a statement typical of Luther and Calvin.⁹¹ Of course, Goodwin does recognize the biblical injunction, often mentioned by the Puritans, to obtain a clear conscience, and the regenerate have "a good conscience" in two senses: justification and sanctification.⁹² When establishing the foundation of their faith, they must see the "good conscience" as the consent of the conscience that Christ's perfect obedience satisfies the demands of the Law written upon the conscience. Nevertheless, in seeking assurance, sanctification is allowed a place in obtaining a good conscience. And yet, ultimately, only the divine promise, not the conscience, can bring peace. Never does anyone--even the best of Christians--come to the place where the conscience is satisfied. "Natural conscience witnesseth the things of the law naturally in man, Rom 11, yet gracious dispositions it cannot."⁹³ In spite of his ghastly sins, David was "a man after God's own heart," but although God saw how remorseful he was after adultery and murder, the Law was not the least bit interested in such things. It can only grade performance based on the expressions of the divine will. It is the conscience that works with the Law, communicating either good news or bad news to the sinner, based on performance. Therefore, there can be no trust in natural conscience.

Not only can the believer's conscience not be trusted ultimately because it is exacting in its expectations and does not understand the Gospel, it falls short because the believer himself falls short, since the Holy Spirit's work in us "is but new beginning, and as yet imperfect, and but a foundation of that building in eternity to be raised whereas Christ hath perfected his, hath 'perfected for ever those that are sanctified' (Heb x 14), by on offering once made, it is therefore we discern not (mind not) the Holy Ghost or his works, as we do Christ and his"⁹⁴ Therefore, we are not to look even to the Holy Spirit's work for "a foundation of that building," but solely to the work of Christ. So far is Goodwin from driving believers into morbid introspection and subjective anxiety, and so close is he to the counsel of Calvin on this very point. Ultimately, the remarkable fact in all of this is that it is the work of Christ that makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to take up residence in unclean hearts. Many Puritans were saying that Christ takes up residence in hearts that have already been prepared, a subject we shall take up in the next chapter, but Goodwin is impressed with the utterly gracious character of the Spirit's occupation, based on the perfection of Christ's work. "But here is a wonder of wonders, that the holy God (as the Spirit is) should dwell in hearts so unholy and unclean, and make them his temples (as 1 Cor vi 19) " He does not simply dwell among sinners, but "in our sinful hearts"⁹⁵

The distinction between Law and Gospel, for Goodwin, is also a difference between the indicative and the imperative, and Goodwin warns against confusing the two. When we do, we set out to enter into the covenant of grace by means of the covenant of works. We seek God's favor by trying to obey his imperatives, rather than by looking to Christ with bare, naked faith.⁹⁶

The Glory of the Gospel

In his second sermon on *The Glory of the Gospel*, Goodwin offers five senses in which the Gospel may be said to be rich in (1) antiquity, (2) distance to acquire it, (3) cost, (4) the tight security, (5) imperishability. Rooted as it is in eternity past, promised in Eden just after the rebellion, repeated and sustained until it was finally fulfilled in Christ, the Gospel is rich in its antiquity. Further, as God became human, and traversed the bounds of time and space, it was a great distance, but, so also, a great cost. The tight security involved speaks of the Gospel's wealth, and finally, it is an imperishable prize, unlike the riches of this world. As glorious as the Law is, the Gospel far excels it.⁹⁷ But many hear this Gospel "word," and fall short of believing it. It is simply too good to be true, they conclude, so they set up objections. If they are convinced that it is both within God's power and will, they will turn to their own condition and find reasons to overthrow the promise, Goodwin observes.

Well, but you will object, that your sins have been of long continuance. Ans. I answer, The mercies of God have been from everlasting. God hath laid up thoughts of peace from the beginning, and therefore, though thy sin hath been for many years, yet it hath been but as yesterday with god, and as long as thou hast not been sinning longer than he hath been thinking of mercy, cast not off all hope of mercy. Obj. But you will argue the reiteration of your sins. Ans. I answer, That God doth reiterate his mercy, Isa. lv. 7. He 'multiplies mercies to pardon,' and heaps up mercy, &c. and it is said that he doth heal backslidings (and what is a backsliding but the falling into the same sin again?), and what is the reason of this? Because he loves freely, and therefore, though he fall into the same sin again, yet do but remember the sure covenant of mercy and grace that he hath made. Obj. But you will say, I have sinned stubbornly. Ans. I answer, God doth pardon that also, Isa. lvi. 17, 19.⁹⁸ My ways of mercy are both above your ways of sinning, and they also exceed all the thoughts of mercy which the best natured of you can have in pardoning others.⁸⁸

The believer's union with Christ must be constantly brought to the struggling conscience, because even the believer's conscience is not perfectly restored. Not only is the believer justified instantaneously upon looking to Christ, there is also a definitive sanctification that immediately

places the believer in a perfectly holy status, although progressive sanctification is life-long and incomplete

But the Scripture elsewhere tells us, that 'Christ by his death hath perfected for ever all that are sanctified,' so Heb x 14, so as in his death they may reckon themselves perfectly dead by faith, and perfectly sanctified, though yet the work be not actually and fully perfected. And all this communion with Christ as a common person, representing them in his death, he there instructs them to be represented and sealed up to them by their baptism, so ver 3, 4⁹⁹

Also, "And all this our communion with Christ in his resurrection, both in respect of sanctification, which the 6th of Romans holds forth, and of justification, which this place in the Colossians holds forth, is lively (as both places declare) set out, and sealed up to us, in the sacrament of baptism"¹⁰⁰ This isn't simply an imitation or a metaphor "It is not simply said, like *as* he was buried, and rose, but *with* him. 'Even baptism,' saith he, 'doth now also save us,' as being the ordinance that seals up salvation, 'not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,' or the washing of the outward man, 'but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ'" (emphasis added)¹⁰¹ Therefore, even the believer's baptism into Christ is seen in an objective vein, with the goal of speaking peace to the conscience that cannot understand the Gospel. Goodwin adds

To open these words. Our consciences are that principle in us which are the seat of the guilt of all the sins of the whole man, unto whose court they all come to accuse us, as unto God's deputy, which conscience is called good or evil, as the state of the man is. If his sin remain unpardoned, then as his estate is damnable, so his conscience is evil. If his sins be forgiven, and his person justified, his conscience is said to be good, conscience having its denomination from the man's state, even as the urine is called good or bad, as the state of a man's body is healthful or sound whose urine it is. Now in baptism, forgiveness of sins and justification being sealed up to a believer's faith and conscience, under that lively representation of his communion with Christ in his resurrection, hence this is made the fruit of baptism, that the good conscience of a believer, sealed up in baptism, hath wherewithal from thence to answer all accusations of sin that can or do at any time come in upon him, and all this, as it is here added, 'by virtue of the resurrection of

Christ ¹⁰² Well, but you will object, that your sins have been of long continuance Ans I answer, The mercies of God have been from everlasting God hath laid up thoughts of peace from the beginning, and therefore, though thy sin hath been for many years, yet it hath been but as yesterday with god, and as long as thou hast not been sinning longer than he hath been thinking of mercy, cast not off all hope of mercy Obj But you will argue the reiteration of your sins Ans I answer, That God doth reiterate his mercy, Isa lv 7 He 'multiplies mercies to pardon,' and heaps up mercy, &c and it is said that he doth heal backslidings (and what is a backsliding but the falling into the same sin again?), and what is the reason of this? Because he loves freely, and therefore, though he fall into the same sin again, yet do but remember the sure covenant of mercy and grace that he hath made Obj But you will say, I have sinned stubbornly Ans I answer, God doth pardon that also, Isa lvii 17,19 ⁹⁸ My ways of mercy are both above your ways of sinning, and they also exceed all the thoughts of mercy which the best natured of you can have in pardoning others ⁸⁸

Once a person is united to Christ through this direct act of faith, then, he or she can be assured that those whom God has justified he continues to uphold in that justification That declaration "cannot be reversed, but stands as legal and warrantable as any act that God or man ever ratified or confirmed," Goodwin writes ¹⁰³ As the believer was crucified with Christ, buried with him, and raised with him to new life, so he or she is raised with Christ and seated with him already in a definitive sense Goodwin directs believers to "see yourselves as good as in heaven already, for Christ is entered as a common person for you," since he is the covenant head and nothing he does is simply for himself Therefore, not only is there remission and forgiveness, but, positive righteousness and acceptance Christ's entry into heaven as the federal head "sets us far above that state of non-condemnation It placeth us in heaven with him You would think yourselves secure enough if you were ascended into heaven "104

Union with Christ not only accounts for one's legal standing, it is also the source of the believer's experience and growth in grace It is not only the method of one's justification, it is the only power in the Christian life "It is the same Christ without us, and the same Christ within us,

only what he is, or did for us without us, the same is applied to us. Or thus, that the whole bulk and sum of our practical religion, as you use to call it, is resolved into God's revealing Christ, and Christ's revealing himself within us, from first to last, throughout our whole lives."¹⁰⁵ Here once more we observe this Puritan divine's remarkable christocentric piety.

Making One's Calling And Election Sure

One of the most frequently cited passages in all of Puritan literature is 2 Peter 1:10, where believers are told to make their calling and election sure. Before we come to Goodwin's exegesis of this passage, we should first trace the interpretations of two other representatives of the tradition. First, Calvin's is itself quite interesting, introducing the epistle with the suggestion that, "Peter encourages them, therefore, to make proof of their calling by godly living."¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Calvin's emphasis in dealing with this passage is on the monergistic activity of God in regeneration and the priority of faith in producing obedience. Calvin does not extrapolate from the passage an elaborate pattern for a practical syllogism. He perceives Peter's main point as "leaving us without the merest scrap of any virtue" before God, including the virtue of "free-will," by which we might bring ourselves into divine favor.¹⁰⁷ When Peter lists the virtues by which we may discern the verity of our profession, Calvin explains, "In demanding these qualities the apostle is by no means maintaining that they are possible for us, but is only showing what we ought to have and to do. When godly men are conscious of their own weakness and see that they fail in their duty, they have no alternative but to take refuge in the help of God."¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the primary use of the Law found in this passage, according to Calvin, appears to be the pedagogical rather than the moral. Then Calvin comes to the matter of discerning one's assurance of election,

to which Peter directly calls believers. Granting that one “confirms his calling by living a good and holy life,” he nevertheless scolds the “sophists” for drawing from that the unwarranted conclusion that election itself is, at least in part, dependent on these. “For this is a proof adduced not from the cause, but from the sign or the result.”¹⁰⁹ Believers may find in their expression of these godly virtues mentioned by the apostle “illustration and evidence of election,” and this might “confirm them in this faith, but in such a way that they place their sure foundations elsewhere.”¹¹⁰ Calvin is very clear on this point.

This assurance of which Peter speaks should not, in my opinion, be referred to conscience, as though the faithful acknowledged themselves before God to be elect and called. He has simply wanted to show that there is no firmness in hypocrites, but that on the contrary those who prove that their calling is sure by their good works are in no danger of falling, because the grace of God by which they are supported is a sure foundation. In this way the foundation of our salvation is certainly not placed in ourselves, and its cause is assuredly outside of us.¹¹¹

In heaven, we shall be without any doubts of our election, but in this life we are assailed. “Meantime we are not left without many necessary helps,” Calvin concludes of Peter’s intention.¹¹²

Richard Sibbes also emphasizes the gracious character of salvation in this passage, but the exegesis places particular stress on using the evidences listed by Peter as means for actively searching out one’s election. “By our calling, therefore, which is by an eternal purpose and grace of God in time, changing and renewing us unto holiness of life, we come to know the eternal decree of God, which otherwise were presumption to search, and may not be looked unto.”¹¹³ Similarly, the apostle Paul became convinced of his calling by discerning the fruit of the Spirit. “This was the ground of his assurance to eternal life, and of his calling to glory and virtue.”¹¹⁴ What is distinct from Calvin’s interpretation is not whether Christian virtues are admitted as evidences

Nor is it a question of whether such effects of election and calling may be considered the ground of the same. Sibbes is no more willing than Calvin to admit that, since he states that such evidences are merely the “ground of his *assurance*,” not of faith itself. Of course, Calvin does not grant such a distinction, but he would certainly not have objected to the use of these evidences as grounds for the experience of assurance, which I have argued to be the main point of the Puritan distinction. Nor is there a distinction between Sibbes’ emphasis on the decree and Calvin’s exegesis, since the decree is concerning election and Calvin treats that as central to the text, which indeed it was for the apostle.

But once we have pushed aside the false contrasts, there is a noticeable difference in that Sibbes, representative of the entire Puritan tradition, views this passage as a pastoral guide to discovering election and deepening assurance. Although in another place he insists that assurance is part of the essence of faith for even the weakest Christian, in some sense and degree,¹¹⁵ Sibbes views this passage in Second Peter as an invitation to revisit William Perkins’s “golden chaine”—the *sylogismus practicus*. Calvin does not say anything that would be at variance with such an interpretation, but he does not seem to be terribly interested in extrapolating the implications. He explains the passage, and then moves on to the next one. Evidence of calling and election may be discovered, but Calvin is more anxious to guard against an over-zealousness in such an enterprise, while Sibbes appears to reflect the Puritan fascination with and commitment to its practical usefulness. Furthermore, Calvin’s exposition also seems more impressed with the despair created by reading the apostle’s list and concluding that one is not chosen, recognizing that the syllogism can work both ways. But instead of it being an infallible witness either of election

or reprobation, one's assessment may lead not to election, but to Christ directly in whom the believer is chosen, as we saw in his comment, "When godly men are conscious of their own weakness and see that they fail in their duty, they have no alternative but to take refuge in the help of God"¹¹⁶ This is not something that the Puritans would not or could not have said, but it is primary for Calvin and takes a secondary place to the practical syllogism for the Puritans

The danger that Goodwin sees in excessively stressing this activity of making one's calling and election sure is two-fold. First, the weak believer may cast his or her faith on the value of the faith itself, instead of on Christ, and second, the mature believer may begin to trust in his or her duties rather than in Christ. For Goodwin, the challenges warrant a reassessment of the place given to the syllogism. Even endeavors after conversion may hinder faith

I do not only mean endeavours of changes, and reformations of heart and life, and the like, that these undermine faith, but oftentimes endeavours after faith itself, when they are put forth in a man's own strength, do hinder and undermine faith. A man, when he sees his former sinfulness and want of Christ, and the necessity of faith, and hath suffered a shipwreck of all his own righteousness, yet he begins to build a ship anew of his own cost, and he thinks by hauling, and tugging, and rowing, in the end to arrive at Christ. But men seek after faith itself, not in a way of faith, but as a work of the law, in their own strength, which strength man, under the legal covenant, once had.¹¹⁷

Like Calvin, and certainly like the best Puritans, including Sibbes, Goodwin is more suspicious of emphasizing the effects rather than the object of faith. This is not because works and endeavors are wrong, but because the corrupt heart of the Christian as well as unbeliever is likely to rebuild a ship of self-righteousness even after he or she has experienced the destruction of the vessel by the gales of the Law. Such preparation or seeking after faith can easily degenerate, says Goodwin, into an attempt to enter into the covenant of grace via the covenant of works.¹¹⁸

Flattery Or Friendship

All of this emphasis on the objective work of Christ, even as the foundation for the believer's life-long journey, does not lead to antinomianism for Goodwin, as "Whatsoever Christ did *for* a Christian he doth *in* him also" (emphasis added) ¹¹⁹ This is not an imperative, as though it were the case that one had been justified by grace through faith alone, but now must become righteous inherently through a covenant of works. Even the possession of an inherent righteousness (new life in Christ, given and sustained by the Holy Spirit) depends on the objective work of Christ and it is a life in which the believer, united with Christ, stands already ¹²⁰

Nevertheless, Goodwin escapes all charges of antinomianism by his insistence on mortification as evidence of genuine regeneration. If one experiences a thorough coldness and deafness to spiritual things, it is safe to conclude that one is spiritually dead. A genuine believer will not be content with his sins, he will not accept a truce.

My brethren, pray consider, either that is not the Word of God or this is not the meaning of it, or else any one that lives in the practice of any known bosom sin is not a Christian. When a thief is hanged, doth he not leave the practice of his thievery? And so should we break off our course in sinning if we ourselves had ever been on the cross of Christ, and crucified with him ¹²¹

Every believer struggles with sinful habits and affections, but if the struggle is not present and one has resigned himself to the mastery of sin, there is no true faith. Although Christ's office as priest is the particular object of justifying faith, the Christ who is received by the believer is both Saviour and Lord. There is a great difference between flattery and friendship, Goodwin says ¹²² But we must seek God for peace (justification) and goodwill (sanctification). "Dost thou think of going to the sacrament, as of going to a friend's house to supper? Rev. iii 20," Goodwin asks ¹²³

If we have come to Christ unfeignedly, we have laid down our weapons. The genuine believer is not like the deceiver who pretends friendship in order to steal precious items from the person's home and take his life if necessary.

Conclusion

Goodwin says that the experience of full assurance via the whispering of the Spirit (the *syllogismus mysticus*) is like "a new conversion."¹²⁴ So distinct is the experience of assurance from the exercise of saving faith. For weak believers, "suited to the lowest faith of the weakest believer, who cannot put forth any act of assurance, and is likewise discouraged from coming unto Christ," there are the following comforts:

1. A definition of faith, and such as will suit the weakest believer, is a coming unto God by Christ for salvation. (1) It is coming to be saved. Let not the want of assurance that God will save thee, or that Christ is thine, discourage thee, if thou hast but a heart to come to God by Christ to be saved, though thou knowest not whether he will yet save thee or no.¹²⁵

In a real sense, the Puritans were aiming at a view of faith and assurance that not only made it possible for the weakest worker to be saved, but for the weakest believer to be saved as well. In other words, not only was justification by grace alone through faith alone, one could be justified by a true and saving faith even if one's faith were so weak that it could only say, "I come, but I am still not sure he will save *me*." Based on 1 Jn 2:13, 14, Goodwin draws out 3 stages: "Fathers in Christ, young men, babes, or new converts not yet grown up, but true believers all."¹²⁶

For Goodwin's part, the conscience, even in the believer, is not capable of speaking the language of the covenant of grace, since it is patterned on the covenant of nature or works. Therefore, there can be no peace unless the Gospel silences the ragings of conscience. The Law has a place in

instructing the believer, but only the Gospel can actually provide the motivation and power to pursue righteousness. Furthermore, the objective orientation of Goodwin's theology does not lead to antinomianism, since union with Christ produces both imputation of righteousness and impartation. There is no saving change in status that fails to effect a corresponding change in allegiances.

Goodwin also embraces a view of sealing that many have associated with more enthusiastic views.¹²⁷ Ephesians 1:13 is one place where the Independent divine enlarges upon this subject, which is not only a departure from Calvin, but from many of his own Puritan brethren.¹²⁸ First, Goodwin discusses the view represented by Piscator and Calvin, that regards faith and sealing as synonymous. Goodwin recognizes that this view would require assurance to be of the essence of faith, so he departs from their interpretation. Faith can bring an assurance that the promise is true, but does not necessarily include with it the assurance of one's own interest in it. The apostle Paul declares of Christ, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise," and Goodwin lays much stress on the order. Since sealing comes "after that ye believed," sealing and faith cannot be considered one and the same.¹²⁹ Zanchy maintains that faith is not the same as sealing, but instead makes the latter synonymous with regeneration. The sealing of the Spirit Zanchius is represented by a wax seal in which the impress of the image of Christ is made. To be renewed in the image of Christ, then, is to be sealed with the Holy Spirit.¹³⁰ Thus, Goodwin argues that the purpose of this sealing is not for the purpose of making their salvation sure, since there is no security needed after faith. Election secures faith. Rather, they are sealed in order to make their assurance of their particular interest in salvation sure.

Therefore, as faith and assurance are distinct, so regeneration and sealing are not always co-existent

Calvin clearly maintained that the sealing of the Spirit is identical to regeneration and union with Christ ¹³¹ Joel Beeke argues that by the time of Perkins, there is a shift from seeing the Holy Spirit himself as the seal to seeing this as the Holy Spirit's sealing the promise to the believer. In other words, it is a shift from an objective to a more subjective interest in "sealing" ¹³² According to Beeke, Paul Bayne tried to harmonize the Reformed-Puritan tradition by arguing that "The Holy Spirit, *and* the graces of the Spirit are the seal assuring our redemption," so that for Bayne, the Holy Spirit is both "the seal and the sealer" ¹³³ All Christians enjoyed the former, but only some experienced the latter, which was associated with assurance ¹³⁴ Richard Sibbes, Bayne's convert and successor, moved more in the direction of rejecting the Reformed view altogether, arguing that the sealing is a "superadded work," confirming and assuring the believer, and this sealing is experienced in degrees ¹³⁵ "Moving a step beyond Sibbes," writes Beeke, "John Preston (1587-1628) taught specifically that the sealing of the Spirit was a *second work* given exclusively to those who overcome" ¹³⁶ According to Preston, this sealing is "a certain divine expression of light" that "we cannot express" ¹³⁷ This language is reminiscent of Goodwin's position, for it was he who carried the banner for the "Spiritual Brotherhood," from Perkins through Bayne, Sibbes and Preston. Beeke observes,

Not surprisingly, the Independent who was most influenced by the Sibbes-Preston tradition, Thomas Goodwin, carries the sealing of the Spirit as a second work to its high tide mark. Consciously rejecting Calvin's position, Goodwin defines such sealing as a 'light beyond the light of ordinary faith. Generally speaking, from Goodwin onward a direct tie was made between the sealing of the Spirit and full assurance of faith' ¹³⁸

John Owen rejected this view of the Spirit's sealing, affirming with Calvin that it is identified

with regeneration and is in fact the giving of the Spirit himself along with his promises¹³⁹ This position on the sealing of the Spirit seems to have its correlation in the debate over faith and assurance. Although Owen, as we have seen, agrees with the Puritan brotherhood concerning the distinction between faith and assurance, those who most stress this distinction appear also to be the most ardent proponents of the distinction between regeneration and sealing, as one is related in the *ordo salutis* to faith and the other to assurance. We have already seen how Goodwin stresses the distinction between faith and assurance even more than his predecessors, and if, as Beeke says, Goodwin represents the “high tide mark” in the move away from the Reformed view of sealing, this point is sufficiently demonstrated.¹⁴⁰ Thus, as faith might lack assurance, so regeneration could lack sealing, and one can see how easily such an emphasis might lead to a greater focus on personal experience and the search for reaching a higher stage of Christian life that is not enjoyed by every believer. With this emphasis, which finds growing support in Sibbes, Preston and finally Goodwin, was it not inevitable that the *sylogismus mysticus* would overtake the *sylogismus practicus*?

Seeking assurance, then, is removed from the matter of seeking faith. In fact, faith must not itself be sought, for even faith can take one away from Christ. It is to Christ directly that faith looks, and the matter of seeking assurance itself is to derive its primary consolation from the sight of Christ crucified, raised, and interceding in heaven at God’s right hand.

Notes to Chapter Eight

1 8 342

2 8 339-40

3 *ibid*

4 *ibid*

5 8 342-50

6 *ibid*

7 *ibid*

8 *ibid*

9 *ibid*

10 8 224

11 *ibid*

12 *ibid*

13 *ibid*

14 8 348-50

15 8 353

16 8 354-7

17 *ibid*

18 *ibid*

19 David Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, op cit* , introduction, esp pp 8-20

20 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 14 18

21 Michael Jenkins, *op cit* , p 346

22 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 24 5

23 Goodwin, 8 358-9 Thomas Brooks' *Heaven On Earth* (1654) strikes this popular note as well "The Spirit is above all possibility of being deceived, he is omnipotent, he is omniscient, he is omnipresent, he is one of the cabinet-council of heaven, he lies and lives in the bosom of the Father, and can call them all by name upon whom the Father hath set his heart, and therefore his testimony must needs be true It is a surer testimony than if a man should hear a voice from heaven pronouncing him to be happy and blessed" (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1982), p 301 Brooks also uses the language of "whisper" in reference to this witness (pp 298-9)

24 *ibid*

25 *ibid*

26 *ibid*

27 8 362-4

28 8 365-6

29 8 372-4

30 *ibid*

31 8 375-6 Also, "Now by body there is meant person, as they that understand the idiom of the Greek tongue know, as soul in the Hebrew is put for person, so many souls are said to come out of Jacob's loins, Exod 1 5, so bodily in the Greek is taken for personally There is, I say, a personal union between the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Jesus Christ and himself, and therefore in the same place it is said to dwell in him, as the head of all principalities and powers, and all that is in God filleth him as our head, and dwelleth personally in him, which phrase, I say, is used by way of distinction from the creature And yet all this while that the Godhead dwelt bodily or personally in him, he remained in the flesh, whereas the union that is now cried up is higher than this of Christ's, and while men seek to be spiritual, they detract from God, and run into blasphemy against God and Christ" (p 376)

32 8 395-6

33 8 404

34 8 164 And yet, he also concedes, "This I must suppose as a foundation for all [assurance], that there is yet an impression and hint wrought in the heart of the poorest believer, of special mercy towards him, which is it that hangs his heart upon what is past, and causeth him to depend upon what is to come" (8 415) Therefore, one is hard-pressed to distinguish this from Calvin's view Although Calvin emphasizes assurance as of the essence of faith itself and Goodwin distinguishes the two, the latter admits that the foundation for all of assurance is the existence of some root of assurance in every believer

35 *ibid*

36 *ibid*

37 8 169

38 *ibid*

39 8 229

40 8 174

41 8 192

42 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 37

43 Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans by Robert C Schultz (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1966), pp 50-60, 111-115

44 Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith*, translated by James Clark (East Sussex Focus Trust, 1992), pp 40-41

45 Alexander Nowell, *op cit*, pp 118, 141, 182

46 *ibid*

47 *ibid*

48 *ibid*

49 Preston, *The Golden Sceptre* (Ligonier, PA Soli Deo Gloria, 1990, from The Religious Tract Society's 1837 reprint), pp 6, 18, 30-32

50 *ibid*

51 *ibid*

52 *ibid*

53 *ibid*, pp 62, 106

54 *ibid*

55 H L Mencken, as quoted by Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints The Puritans As They Really Were* (Grand Rapids Academie, 1986), p 1

56 Owen, 6 339, 341, 325

57 *ibid*

58 John Winthrop, in his journal, offers one example of the stress that could accompany such preaching "A woman of Boston congregation, having been in much trouble of mind about her spiritual estate, at length grew into utter desperation, and could not endure to hear of any comfort, etc, so as one day she took her little infant and threw it into a well, and then came into the house and said, now she was sure she should be damned, for she had drowned her child," *History of New England* (Boston Little, Brown, and Company, 1853), vol 1, pp 281-282 One should not draw too much from such a desperate instance, but the tragedy does correspond to the general climate during the spiritual depression leading up to the Antinomian Controversy

59 Prefatory note by editor, Owen vol 6

60 Owen's own preface, in vol. 6

61 *ibid*

62 Goodwin, 8 476

63 *ibid*

- 64 *ibid*
65 8 479
66 4 113
67 4 119-20
68 4 149-50
69 *ibid*
70 4 162-165
71 *ibid*
72 *ibid*
73 *ibid*
74 4 179
75 4 320
76 *ibid*
77 *ibid*
78 *ibid*
79 *ibid*
80 4 169
81 4 228
82 4 235
83 4 276
84 6 93-4
85 8 277
86 6 103-110
87 *ibid*
88 8 127-130
89 *ibid*
90 *ibid*
91 6 261, cf p 307
92 6 268
93 6 27
94 6 39
95 6 42
96 6 226
97 6 244 See Goodwin's Works, vo III (Revelation), for the nature of the confusion of works-righteousness and free grace in Goodwin's day
98 6 566
99 4 34
100 *ibid*
101 *ibid*
102 4 42
103 4 39
104 4 51
105 4 343
106 Calvin, *Commentary on 2 Peter*, trans by William B Johnston (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1979), pp 325-335
107 *ibid*
108 *ibid*
109 *ibid*
110 *ibid*

- 111 *ibid*
- 112 *ibid*
- 113 Richard Sibbes, *Works*, volume 7, p 494
- 114 *ibid*
- 115 *ibid* , vol 3, p 467
- 116 *ibid* , vol 7, p 494
- 117 Goodwin, 8 547
- 118 *ibid*
- 119 6 228-9
- 120 *ibid*
- 121 6 230
- 122 6 133ff, 221
- 123 6 143
- 124 1 251
- 125 4 88
- 126 7 475
- 127 Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp p 38 ff
- 128 Goodwin, vol 1 of 1681 edition, (London Jonathan Robinson, 1681), p 201, Ephesians 1 13
- 129 *ibid*
- 130 *ibid*
- 131 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 2 11
- 132 Joel Beeke, *op cit* , p 253
- 133 *ibid* , p 254
- 134 *ibid*
- 135 *ibid* , p 255
- 136 *ibid* , p 257
- 137 cited by Beeke, p 257
- 138 *ibid* , pp 257-258
- 139 *ibid* , p 259
- 140 *ibid*

Chapter Nine

“Without All Preparation”

Goodwin and the Controversy Concerning Preparationism

Happy is that soul that in conversion or calling was pitched first on Christ, or soon upon his conversion. If you that are now converted had lived in our younger days, you would have seen that we were held under John Baptist’s water, of being humbled for sin, and the work of sanctification. But now, happy it is with some whose lot it is that their conversion work begins with Christ.¹

This mild snipe comes not from Mrs. Anne Hutchinson, nor John Cotton, it is not the antinomian ruminations of John Eaton or John Saltmarsh. Rather, Thomas Goodwin is its author and the target of his criticism was the heavy stress placed on “preparation,” a tendency that he evidently identified with “our younger days.”²

We have seen how Goodwin stands in the broad Protestant tradition of distinguishing Law and Gospel, the former preparing the way for the latter. However, as the accent on the experience of conversion is increasingly marked, the preaching of the Law intensifies into a somewhat quantifiable experience of humiliation, a process of being stripped of all pretenses to righteousness. Calvin instructed his readers to regulate the preaching of the Law according to the audience, as when the rich young ruler receives its brunt, but “elsewhere he comforts with the promise of grace without any mention of law others who have already been humbled by this sort of knowledge.”³ As Goodwin sees it, the problem is not the Law-Gospel order, but the emphasis placed on a prolonged period of preparation before embracing the Gospel.⁴ If there is too great an emphasis on preparation, Goodwin argues, the believer will never move on to assurance, but will

wallow in despair ⁵

Perry Miller made the subject of “preparationism” a major issue in New England’s Antinomian Controversy, as a sign of a creeping Arminianism that attempted to soften the determinism inherent in the Reformed *ordo salutis* ⁶ But as Stoeber points out, Miller ignores the rather extensive references to preparation as a category in English Puritan literature ⁷ Furthermore, Miller’s interpretation is met with a number of inconsistencies, not the least of which being the fact that Cotton, during the New England controversy, wrote extensively of “preparations” antecedent to conversion in *The New Covenant*, which does not differ significantly in its treatment of preparation from Thomas Shepard’s account ⁸ Stoeber has also argued convincingly that Shepard’s *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, which is admittedly rigorous in its attention to duties, is a discourse on the third use of the law (its moral use) Only visible saints are in view it is not concerned with preparations antecedent to conversion, but with the eschatological dimension--that is, preparations to be made by the church in anticipation of her husband’s return ⁹

Understanding ‘Preparationism’

Before we can appreciate Goodwin’s concerns over the later developments of preparationism, it is essential to first explain the background and definition Like the motivation for separating faith from assurance, the motive for preparationism appears to be pastoral Like the practical syllogism, it is not calculated to lead to despair, but to lead those who are already experiencing doubt and despair to take courage and hope in the promise

Early in the development of English Calvinism, John Bradford wrote of God, “He cannot condemn the penitent and believer, for that were against his promise Let us therefore labour,

study, cry, and pray for repentance and faith, and then cannot we be damned. This, I say, let us do, and not be too busy-bodies in searching the majesty and glory of God, or in nourishing doubting of salvation.”¹⁰ The call to “labour to enter that rest” (Heb 4), was motivated by a desire to keep the people from despairing of being elect, not to accent human activity in a works-righteousness fashion. It was to keep the believer from devoting so much attention to the divine decree, abstractly considered outside of Christ and the Gospel, that he would become lost in the “labyrinth” of metaphysical speculation.¹¹ We are again reminded how the Puritan emphasis on the practical syllogism, means, endeavors and preparation were intended to counter metaphysical speculation, not to engender the same.

However, as Puritanism developed, so too did this notion of “preparing unto grace.” As one could emphasize the conditional side of the covenant of grace without departing from the system, one could also emphasize the duties in preparation without confusing the Law and the Gospel, antecedent conditions of saving faith and consequent conditions. Even when there was no direct confusion, however, the emphasis on conditionality and preparation together led a number of high Calvinists to question the practice and the language in which it was framed.¹²

As Ian Breward points out, the Reformed orthodox--whether William Twisse in England (Prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly) or the strict Calvinists in Holland who had run into Ames, Voetius, and Teelinck--did not appreciate this emphasis on the notion that “the more we endeavour, the more assistance and help we find from him.”¹³ But here again we must tread carefully. Did the new emphasis deny any article of Reformed orthodoxy? Although at times some preparationists sound perilously close to synergism, each insists that preparation for

conversion simply refers to the use of natural means – exposing oneself, for instance, to the preaching of the Word, from which faith comes

R. T. Kendall and others writing in a similar vein use this as another point at which Calvin is pitted against his successors¹⁴ “Away then with all that ‘preparation’ which many babble about,” Calvin declares, and Kendall cites, in order to demonstrate that the Puritan preparationists had become the very “papists” eschewed by the reformers not long since¹⁵ However, Kendall fails to raise the question at this point whether this Roman “preparationism” (which is obviously what Calvin had in mind) is similar to the Puritan variety Are there no contrasts? A one-to-one correspondence cannot be made without such an argument

William Perkins, once more, is supposed to be the the English conduit of the allegedly philosophical Theodore Beza in reconstructing Calvin’s theology¹⁶ But upon reading Perkins’ account of the Roman doctrine of justification and preparation, the one thing that one cannot say is that there is this one-to-one correspondence If Perkins can rail at Roman “preparation” as well as Calvin ever did, surely whatever preparation with which both he and Calvin were concerned is not of the same nature as the “preparation” adopted by the Puritans (including Perkins) Perkins writes

They [Rome] hold that before justification there goes a preparation thereunto, which is an action wrought partly by the Holy Ghost and partly by the power of freewill, whereby a man disposeth himself to his own future justification In the preparation they consider of the ground of justification and things proceeding from it The ground is faith, which they define to be a general knowledge whereby we understand and believe that the doctrine of the Word of God is true Things proceeding from this faith are these a sight of our sins, a fear of hell, hope of salvation, love of God, repentance and suchlike, all which men have attained, they are then fully disposed (as they say) to their justification This preparation being made, then comes justification itself, which is an action of God whereby he maketh a man righteous It hath two parts the first and the second The first is when a sinner or an evil man is made a good man And to effect this two things are required first, the pardon of sin which is one part of the first justification, secondly the infusion of

inward righteousness whereby the heart is purged and sanctified, and this habit of righteousness stands specially in hope and charity After the first justification, followeth the second which is when a man, of a good or just man, is made better and more just ¹⁷

It is this Roman view of preparation that Perkins takes apart, piece by piece, without a single reference to a Protestant version To be sure, Perkins argued a form of preparationism, as we shall see below, but to make Calvin's attacks on Roman preparationism a direct criticism of the Puritan notion, simply because the word "preparation" appears, is highly speculative Actually, Perkins thought of "preparation" as nothing more than the Law going before the Gospel ¹⁸ In fact, he states in his *Galatians* commentary the following

Here are such persons as live in the securitie and hardnesse of their hearts, are to be admonished to repent of their sinnes, and to begin to turne unto God For they must know, that they live under a most hard and cruell master, that will doe nothing but accuse, terrifie, and condemne them, and cause them to runne headlong to utter desperation And if they die being under the law, they must looke for nothing but death and destruction without mercie For the law is mercilesse This consideration serveth notably to awake them that are dead in their sinnes Againe, all such as with true and honest hearts have begun to repent and beleeve, let them bee of good comfort For they are not under the dominion of the law, but they are dead to the law, and under grace, having a Lord, who is also their mercifull Saviour, who will give them protection against all the terrours of the law, and spare them as a father spares his child that serves him, and not breake them, though they bee but as weake and bruised reeds, and as smoaking flaxe ¹⁹

It is obvious that for Perkins, "preparation" is synonymous with the preaching of the Law and "beleeving" is synonymous with the reception of the Gospel This is the context for the remarks above, as Perkins scolds "the papists" for confusing the Law and the Gospel, as if they were really substantially the same doctrine To say that one cannot regenerate himself is not to say that he cannot bring himself, by nature, under the means of grace through which the Holy Spirit

regenerates. Many things precede the new birth, such as breathing, eating and drinking, speaking and other natural activities, but these are not responsible for regeneration. Similarly, to suggest that there are certain preparations for the new birth does not necessarily mean that any of these activities is an efficient or even instrumental cause of regeneration.²⁰ Nature is not eradicated by grace, the Puritans insisted against the antinomians, therefore, God works through ordinary means to effect extraordinary results.²¹ Thus, the obvious suspicion of such encouragement to “preparations” is against enthusiastic passivity and the eradication of nature rather than, as is often suspected, a clear articulation of the unconditionality of grace.²² That the issue is nature-grace rather than legalism-grace can be further demonstrated by Melancthon’s argument along similar lines

‘Yes,’ we might say, ‘but I cannot believe that God gives me his Holy Spirit!’ True, but we should know that God gives his word even to us, and that he wants to give us the Holy Spirit, just as he gives us his word. Inasmuch as he has called us, we should accept his word and Holy Spirit. Having heard the gospel, we should not consciously continue in sin or remain mired in doubt, foolishly thinking, I will wait until I feel God’s miraculous rapture upon me. These are the words of enthusiasts and Anabaptists. The heart should trust itself with God’s word, and immediately the Son of God himself will work in us and strengthen us with his Holy Spirit, and at the same time we should beseech him to help us, for Christ says, ‘How much more will your Father give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’ And the terrified man in Mark 9:24 pleads, ‘I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief.’ We should sustain ourselves with this gospel, acknowledge God’s will, and not strive against it nor wantonly remain in doubt.²³

Why should one refuse the ordinary helps God allows to people in order for them to come to faith in Christ? “Having heard the gospel, we should not consciously continue in sin or remain mired in doubt, foolishly thinking, I will wait until I feel God’s miraculous rapture upon me.” One may not be regenerated, and yet avail himself or herself of the means of grace which God has appointed to that end. But this was not always as clearly articulated as Perkins exhibits in his

Galatians commentary²⁴ Indeed, in the sermons, for instance, of Joseph Alleine (1634-68), the process of conversion takes center-stage and preparation for the Gospel is not merely the work of the Law in bringing the sinner to self-despair, but is itself (so it seems) part of the Gospel²⁵ The very confusion against which Perkins warned between the Law and the Gospel is ignored in some of the “preparationist” preaching, especially of the later Puritans²⁶ A contemporary of Goodwin’s, Obadiah Sedgwick (1600-1658) defined “preparation” in this sense of the preaching of the Law as well

Preparations to grace are different and unequal, all men are not prepared by the same degrees, or in the same manner, for Christ, conviction of the natural estate, and attrition, and anguish, and those legal operations, those are preparations, for men must know their sinful condition, they must have the spirit of bondage, they must be heavy and weary before they can lay hold of Christ²⁷

These “legal operations” are not in the category of “Gospel” They hold out no promise of life upon the fulfillment of the conditions They are conditions only in the sense that they bring the sinner to the end of his or her self-confidence The end in view is, “To evidence unto a man the foulness of his heart and life, to convince him of a total unworthiness, to produce most inward dislikes of such an abominable thing as sin is, and to make a man willing upon God’s own conditions, to take and receive Christ ”²⁸ These operations differ from person to person and one should not use a check-list in order to discern genuine legal preparation “These are the ends which, in some sooner, in others later, accomplished, the Lord ceases the workings of preparation ”²⁹

Thus, the argument of Perry Miller, that “preparationism” was a proto-Arminian way of softening Calvin’s determinism,³⁰ fails to acknowledge the fact that (a) such preparations were

not in themselves capable of regenerating or justifying, (b) no act or duty on the human side merited divine action, (c) the issue was not one of grace versus works, but of grace versus nature. In other words, the Puritan concern was not to make believing more difficult, by requiring an obstacle course of preparatory duties, but to make believing easier, by raising the sinner's consciousness of his need for Christ through the terrors of the Law and the beauty of the Gospel.³¹ An unregenerate person could respond to these duties--attending the preaching of the Word, engaging in godly conversation, inquiring into the state of his soul, meditating on the seriousness of sin and his own personal guilt, without admitting synergism. Only God could give repentance and faith, using the Word to effect regeneration, but human activity could be encouraged toward making use of those converting ordinances.

One may discern in these examples a greater attention to the anatomy of the preparation for the Gospel by the application of the Law, but the categories and the substance of the arguments are consistent with the broader Protestant position represented by the reformers and their successors. It is worth noting the position taken by Richard Baxter, and shared by John Goodwin, on this matter of preparation, distinguishing it from the notion put forth by Perkins and the mainstream Reformed tradition.³² At first, it seems that even Baxter defends a view of preparation that is simply synonymous with the preaching of the Law according to its pedagogical use. In the form of a dialogue, Baxter answers objections to his views, giving the name "Libertine" to his fictitious opponent and "Paul" to himself. "Libertine" first accuses "Paul" of insisting that men and women cannot come to Christ unless they are "prepared"

You set men on Repenting, and Doing, and Working for Salvation, and so teach them to trust in a Righteousness of their own, and do not tell them that All Christs Righteousness is ours being imputed to us, and that Believing is our Conversion, to which you are to call men. If they

Believe, they have a perfect righteousness in Christ ³³

Included in the accusation is that Baxter thereby subverts the new Covenant by making the believer rather than Christ the party entering into covenant with the Father “You overthrow the Gospel, in making it a Law,” and “make Faith to justify as a condition of our performance”³⁴

To these hypothetical accusations, Baxter replies,

Must they Believe that he is the Mediator between God and man, before they have learned that there is a God? and that this God is True, and Just? Or before they have learnt that man is a sinner? and deserveth death? and what sin is? Or before they have learnt that we cannot redeem and save ourselves?³⁵

Further, must the sinner take Christ to be his savior before he is willing? “Libertine” concedes the point, but asserts, “He must come to Christ *to make him willing, and not think that he must bring willingness with him This is your Legal doctrine*” (emphasis in original) ³⁶ Here, willingness is not viewed as an antecedent condition for coming to Christ, but Baxter asks his opponent to simply explain how one may come to Christ while he is unwilling to do so “Libertine” acknowledges the point, but pushes the point further “You would hide your eyes with words! You teach that men must have good desires before they come to Christ, as if they must bring with them good desires of their own, or by Preparatory Grace” Baxter asks, “Can a man Accept of Christ as Saviour to save him from sin and punishment and Gods displeasure, and to justify, sanctifie and glorifie him, before he hath any desire to be saved from sin or punishment, or Gods displeasure, or to be justified, sanctified or glorified?” His interlocutor replies, “He that hath no such Desires, must come to Christ for them, and believe”³⁷

Obviously, there is no introduction of works-righteousness to say that before one may receive

Christ, he or she must be willing to accept him. Such a statement is tautological, but “Libertine” is opposed to any suggestion that there is some virtuous activity on the human side that somehow effects justification or conversion. Strictly speaking, Baxter has not said anything of the kind in this defense of the obvious, and he drives his fictional character to the point of conceding that one must possess knowledge and assent before one can trust and that there must be a sense of sinfulness. But “Libertine” is not convinced that this is all that is meant by “preparatory grace,” certain that the notion itself is smuggling merit into justification.³⁸

Nevertheless, “Libertine” is not everything his name implies, since Baxter himself bases preparation on a dubious foundation that mainstream Puritans rejected. First, Baxter did object to the Reformed doctrine of justification. “Shew me how many of these six hundred texts do not speak of such inherent or performed personal Righteousness, as is distinct from such as you describe in your sense of Imputation.”³⁹ The “first Reception of Right to Christ” is a reward given to the exercise of faith.

But our after-mercies and final glory, being promised on condition of such a faith as worketh by love, obedience, and improvement of God’s mercies in good works, and patience, perseverance and conquest of the flesh, the World and the Devil, therefore they have been more unanimously agreed not only *de re*, but that the names of Reward and Rewardableness or Merit and Worthiness are here fit, but used only in the fore explained sense,

which corresponds to merit *de congruo* in the traditional scholastic categories.⁴⁰ Thus, Baxter appears to embrace the Tridentine view of justification, distinguishing between the grounds and causes of two distinct justifications. Baxter further undermines the Protestant doctrine by declaring, “We are sentenced just, because so first made just.”⁴¹ “Libertine” objects “All of our righteousness (our Universal Righteousness) is in Christ alone, not in us.” But Baxter replies, since the best Christian is still sinful, “such a one is not Universally justified or just.”⁴² Thus it would appear from these statements that justification is sanctification, according to Baxter. The

importance of this controversy is brought into sharper focus when we think of how Baxter quarreled with Owen and Goodwin over these very points. The Savoy Declaration and the Westminster Confession both confessed a justification by imputation, "Not by imputing faith it self, the act of believing or any other Evangelical obedience to them as their Righteousness but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ to them"⁴³. Baxter's response to such statements was equally clear. "I would it could be hid from the world, that these words are not only in the Independents Savoy Confession, but even in the Confession of the Westminster Assembly, cap 11. How well forever they may mean, Gods oft repeated Word should rather have been expounded, than denied"⁴⁴. For Baxter, not only was justification confused with sanctification, the covenant of grace was virtually undistinguishable from the covenant of works and the Law and the Gospel were one and the same. "And bethink you whether those rash and self-conceited Divines that have reviled Papists and Arminians for saying that Christs Gospel was a Law, or that he made a new Law, have done good service to the Christian or the Protestant Cause? or have rather done much to harden the Papists into a more confident conceit that Protestants are Hereticks?"⁴⁵

It is no wonder, then, that there might be an alarm among "high Calvinists" such as Owen and Goodwin concerning this sort of a view of preparation for grace⁴⁶. But Baxter's earlier remarks about the necessity of willing to receive Christ before the act of faith and the necessary antecedent conditions of hearing the Word and recognizing one's own sinfulness are surely not in any way derogatory of grace. Where Baxter diverts from the traditional Puritan approach is in the confusion of Law and Gospel and justification and sanctification, even though he represents his libertine opponent as an enemy of even the most obvious prerequisites to saving faith

For the principal divines, “preparation” was synonymous with the preaching of the Law, driving sinners to repentance, fear of God’s righteous judgment, and leading them by this terror to a desire for Christ and redemption⁴⁷ This is how one was “prepared” for grace and how one attained a desire or willingness that was a necessary prerequisite for coming to Christ William Twisse, a critic of preparationism beyond the simple preaching of the Law according to its pedagogical use, was nevertheless the moderator of the Westminster Assembly Thomas Goodwin himself selected the tack of trying to redirect the emphasis and focus rather than trying to attack preparationism directly

It is faith that ultimately strikes that great stroke in preparation so much spoken of, and truly other preparation will not drive a man to Christ When the soul is in a storm, and is even cast away in its own apprehension, when it hath thrown overboard all his own goods, all his own righteousness, all his own hopes, all his own abilities, or whatever it be, and if God should leave the soul in that condition, the wrath of God, like mighty waves, would break in upon it, and swallow it up What doth faith now? It climbs up to the top of the mast Oh there is Christ, I have spied out the Lord Jesus, and it makes out to him instantly, gets aboard of him presently Then again, though there is a radical union that we have with Jesus Christ, without all preparation, for he takes us before we take him, yet notwithstanding, all the communion we have with Jesus Christ is transacted by faith It is not love that makes another present, it may set the fancy on to work to make pictures of the party absent, but it is divine faith alone that hath the art to make God and Jesus Christ present It ‘sees God that is invisible,’ &c , causeth God to dwell in the heart, and bringeth Christ down from heaven, and causeth him to dwell in the heart⁴⁸

In such a maelstrom, the preparationist would provide the “seeker” with a long list of labours, endeavours, and duties It is not that he believes that these duties have any intrinsically salvific or meritorious value (unlike Roman or Arminian synergism), but that they prepare a person to receive Christ by faith alone Goodwin, however, argues that union with Christ and all that this union entails is secured by faith and not in the least by our own preparation

As we have seen, Goodwin does not deny the necessity of faith for justification, nor the

necessity of consequent fruits of repentance. He denies justification from eternity and insists on the unity of Word and Spirit. Nevertheless, there is a more mystical language developing in the late seventeenth century (evident in the development of Cambridge Platonism, in the very seedbed of the Puritan nursery), and Goodwin is not reluctant to employ it. Further, he really does differ from mainstream Puritanism on placing the *sylogismus mysticus* far above the *sylogismus practicus* and reducing to the point of practically rejecting the role of preparations for grace, and also follows the view associated with antinomian “enthusiasm,” that the Holy Spirit indwells believers in his very person.⁴⁹ It is his person primarily, and only secondarily his graces, whose indwelling presence is uppermost in Goodwin’s mind. And yet, he rejects as an enthusiastic error the notion that the soul is united to the Holy Spirit essentially, so that the soul shares in divine substance.⁵⁰ Goodwin insists, against the antinomians, that although the Holy Spirit comes upon a person in order to regenerate, and apart from his cooperation, the proper residence and communion of the Holy Spirit (and the communion that he effects with the Father and the Son) takes place when one believes.⁵¹ Furthermore, although he is critical of the abuses made of preparationism, Goodwin discourses rather largely on “Humiliation for sin, and the necessity thereof in order to faith,” which is, as we have seen, the original and primary meaning of preparation for grace.⁵²

Endeavours To Believe Same Idea?

In his discussion of justifying faith, Goodwin expresses the difficulty of believing. Because it is contrary to the natural reason, conscience, and will, faith faces many obstacles. Therefore, he follows with “endeavours to believe.” But is this not the same idea as preparationism? Does not such talk lead the believer back to the place where faith is a work, and a strenuous work at that? Not at all, since the difficulty of believing lies not in its intrinsic complexity or the energy required in exercising it, rather it is difficult precisely because we are so carnally minded. It is

because we are bent on saving ourselves by some form of works-righteousness that appeals to our natural reason, conscience, and will that faith is an impossibility apart from divine grace

Nevertheless, as we have seen in Goodwin, this moral inability does not mean that we are naturally incapable of making use of certain means. We may certainly not be able to change our own hearts, but we can choose--without any miraculous conversion, to hear the Word of God proclaimed and to observe the congregation feeding on Christ by faith through the Supper. One can place himself or herself within the proper sphere of the Spirit's common, covenantal activity, and this is within one's power even as an unregenerate person. "A woman cannot of herself conceive or quicken the fruit of her body," Goodwin illustrated,

but yet she can take heed of what may destroy it, and hinder quickening and conception. She may beware of journeys, dancings, violent motions which may cause it to miscarry, and so much the more careful are they that are to bring forth a prince, an heir of a kingdom. Now, such an one is the new creature which is a-forming in the heart. And though abstinence from sin, and fearfulness to offend, can no way further the work, yet because the contrary may hinder it, we are to endeavour it.⁵³

So Goodwin seems to allow only a negative use of "endeavours." In order to safeguard monergism, he insists that such endeavors cannot positively contribute to regeneration, but "the contrary may hinder it." "Only this, it is not all the humiliation in the world can give them power to believe, as many think, Oh, if I were thus humbled I could believe!"⁵⁴

As we saw in his moving preface to *Christ Set Forth*, Goodwin was deeply concerned that people were so caught up in being humbled by the terror of the Law that they almost found their salvation or at least consolation in the degree of their dread and humiliation rather than in the cross of Christ.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, inasmuch as resistance to the obvious "endeavours" may hinder conversion--since God works through means, surely every effort should be made to use them. The

orthodox Reformed doctrine is “not opposed to using means, but to trusting in means”⁵⁶ Again, there is nothing in this that is a doctrinal departure from Calvin. Furthermore, even the most radical preparationists do not give up their monergism. There is a variety in terms of pastoral emphasis, but the tradition is still of a whole piece theologically, even though the preparationism Goodwin had come to identify with his younger years had become something against which sound Calvinists felt obliged to speak. The “endeavours” one is to use in order to believe are laid out quite clearly by Goodwin. First, one is to “draw near.” But remember, Goodwin warns, this is still not saving faith.⁵⁷

A passage often used by preparationists in this regard was Hebrews 4:11: “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest,” but Goodwin is not as rigorous here as the more extreme preparationists. But Goodwin explains, “Now this exhortation, ‘Let us therefore endeavour to enter in,’ or truly to believe, and so take heed of a false faith, is an inference of something said before,” viz., the preaching of the Gospel which the Jews in the desert did not combine with faith.⁵⁸ The labouring to enter was not a matter of ingratiating duties, but of pushing out of the way obstacles to faith. Hence, the only issue in this “endeavouring to enter in” is endeavoring to distinguish a true from a false faith. Faith is the matter, not duties.

Sanctification Before Justification?

One of the most important issues raised by this notion of preparationism, at least for the Puritan doctrine, is whether it is possible for any sanctification to take place prior to justification. This is important in order to maintain the Protestant doctrine that the righteousness of Christ is imputed “not for any thing wrought in [the elect], or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone.”⁵⁹ We must remember that preparation rested on the Reformed doctrine, first taught by Bucer, of a

“first” and “second” justification⁶⁰ Terms must be used in context, and Bucer would have been the last person to have suggested that “justification” in both cases refers to imputation. He is still freely employing Roman categories, but reinterpreting them in a Protestant direction.⁶¹ The “first justification,” which Rome associated with baptism, Bucer and the Reformed tradition associated with *remissio* and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness *sola fide*.

The second “justification” is actually sanctification. This, after all, is the doctrine of the reformers, as we have seen in earlier chapters. In the new birth and justification, one is passive, but in sanctification one is active--faith being the active principal or root. Calvin urges,

We are to look to the will of God alone, eager to receive His commands, and prepared to obey His orders. Our members, too, are to be dedicated and consecrated to His will, so that all our powers of soul and body may aspire to His glory alone. The reason for this is that, since our former life has been destroyed, the Lord has not in vain created us for another, to which our actions ought to correspond.⁶²

This is why it is essential that we define terms according to their original context, and not according to our own. Anachronism leads Kendall to read incipient synergism into Beza, Perkins, and the Puritans, which only comes to full flower in preparationism.⁶³ But preparationism is concerned with the state of the natural man or woman, before regeneration and the exercise of saving faith, while the “second conversion” or “second justification” is concerned with what happens after the monergistic act of divine regeneration. Once one who is spiritually dead is made alive, the possibility of cooperation is secured for the first time.⁶⁴ This is not synergism, because new life is secured before the first activity of the convert--even before he or she could exercise saving faith. The Westminster Divines include under effectual calling divine activities of enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh, renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.”⁶⁵

Sanctification is not actually discussed until the thirteenth chapter, with justification and adoption separating it from effectual calling. Nevertheless, it is one thing to say that the new birth precedes faith (in order to insure against synergism), and to say that this new birth which precedes faith produces graces prior to the exercise of saving faith. In that case, the Puritans would be open to the charge of making sanctification in that larger sense (i.e., beyond initial repentance and faith) prior to justification. Ironically, the Puritan concern to protect monergism threatened its concern to protect the priority of justification, and this tension becomes clearer with Goodwin's warnings

Christ is the object of faith, in opposition to our own humiliation, or graces, or duties. Christ is the object of faith, in a distinction from the promises. We are not to trust, nor rest in humiliation, as many do, who quiet their consciences from this, that they have been troubled. That promise, 'Come to me, you that are weary and heavy laden, and you shall find rest,' hath been much mistaken, for many have understood it, as if Christ had spoken peace and rest simply unto that condition, without any more ado, and so have applied it unto themselves, as giving them an interest in Christ, whereas it is only an invitement of such (because they are most apt to be discouraged) to come unto Christ, as in whom alone their rest is to be found. If therefore men will set down their rest in being 'weary and heavy laden,' and not come to Christ for it, they sit down besides Christ for it, they sit down in sorrow. This is to make John (who only prepared the way for Christ) to be the Messiah indeed (as many of the Jews thought), that is, to think the eminent work of John's ministry (which was to humble, and so prepare men for Christ) to be their attaining of Christ himself. Secondly, we are not to rest in graces or duties, they all cannot satisfy our consciences, much less God's justice. 66

This leads Goodwin into a moving defense of faith in Christ over faith in preparation

Were any of your duties crucified for you? Graces and duties are the daughters of faith, the offspring of Christ, and they may in time of need indeed nourish their mother, but not first beget her. In third place, Christ's person, and not barely the promises of forgiveness, is to be the object of faith. There are many poor souls humbled for sin, and taken off from their own bottom, who, like Noah's dove, fly over all the word of God, to spy out what they may set their foot upon, and eving therein many free and gracious promises, holding forth forgiveness of sins, and justification, they immediately close with them, and rest on them alone, not seeking for, or closing with Christ in those promises. 67

“Grace and duties are the *daughters of faith*,” Goodwin demands, “the *offspring* of Christ, and they may in time of need indeed nourish their mother, but not first beget her ”⁶⁸ Thus, Goodwin asserts the priority of faith over faith’s noble fruit, restoring the Reformed and Protestant balance that was being apparently lost on some of his brethren. The Puritan *ordo*, grounded in exegesis and also in the debates of the day, guarded against Arminian synergism, but required the emphatic caveat that the priority of regeneration serves only to represent repentance and faith as dependent on divine grace rather than the introduction of virtues and graces into the act of justifying itself. As Perkins argued that it was a “papistical error” to maintain that justification includes both remission and an infusion of inherent righteousness,⁶⁹ and the representative works of Puritan theology never strayed from this warning, although the inherent righteousness of regeneration, turning a sinner to God, could be easily confused with justification without clear distinctions. Part of the confusion surrounding preparationism, Goodwin says, has to do with a failure to distinguish the absolute promises from conditional ones. First, “There are absolute promises, made to no conditions ”⁷⁰ Second, “There are inviting promises, as that before mentioned, ‘Come to me, you that are weary ’”⁷¹ Third,

There are assuring promises, as those made to such and such qualifications of sanctification, &c. But still what is it that is promised in them, which the heart should only eye? It is Christ, in whom the soul rests and hath comfort in, and not in its grace. Even as at the sacrament, the elements of bread and wine are but outward signs to bring Christ and the heart together, and then faith lets the outward elements go, and closeth, and treats immediately with Christ, unto whom these let the soul in, so grace is a sign inward, and whilst men make use of it only as of a bare sign to let them in unto Christ, and their rejoicing is not in it, but in Christ, their confidence being pitched upon him, and not upon their grace.⁷²

Many of the leading preparationists argued that such promises (“Come unto me, all ye that

labour and are heavy-laden," etc) were offered upon terms of preparation ⁷³ In other words, the invitation presupposes that the individual concerned has been properly humbled, has demonstrated a growing interest in spiritual things, and has made good use of whatever natural resources were available Without denying means, Goodwin will have nothing to do with this

Some detract from the absoluteness of these promises, in saying they are made upon other fore-supposed lower and subordinate prerequisite conditions to be performed first by men, as to improve natural helps well, &c But this were to embase the covenant of grace by subjecting it to the covenant of works, as that which must take its rise from former actings of ours, predisposing to the gifts of grace ⁷⁴

Goodwin realizes that the preparationism taught by the likes of Peter Bulkely links the unconditional promise to the direct act of faith, and the conditional promises to the faith of assurance At least this does not make justifying faith itself to rest upon conditions, as Goodwin warns against in the previous citation, but Goodwin would even wish that assurance itself would be grounded upon absolute promises

Mr Bulkely, in that New-England controversy, seems to be an opposer of this opinion, that absolute promises are the means and primary object of full assurance of faith, through an immediate testimony of the Spirit, without conditional promises, by which only, says he, in the ordinary course, if we will have any trial of our estates by the word, we must have it by the conditional promises, yet would I not, says he further, make the absolute promises useless There be two acts of faith, saith he, one of adherence or dependence, another of assurance There be also two kinds of promises, absolute and conditional Mark now how these do fit and answer one another, the absolute promises to the faith of adherence, the conditional to the faith of assurance For example, God comes and says, For mine own sake will I do thus and thus unto you, in an absolute promise Here is a ground for the faith of adherence to cleave unto, though I be most unworthy, yet will I hang upon this promise, because it is for his own sake that the Lord will perform this mercy, that he may be glorified There be also conditional promises,--'He that believeth shall be saved,'--by means of which (we have the experience and feeling of such grace in ourselves) we grow to an assurance that we are of those that he will shew the free grace upon And thus the absolute promises are laid before us as the foundation of our salvation, which is wrought in the adhering to the promise, and the conditional as the foundation of our assurance

And though I do not wholly fall in with this latter part of his conclusion, as if conditional promises served only for a foundation of assurance, yet with the former part, that absolute promises are suited and fitted unto faith of adherence, or of the act of justifying faith, properly

and truly such, I fully close with, and do add, that it is they that are the most proper objects for such a faith, and not conditional promises [Therefore] the true act of faith as justifying doth, throughout the whole of a man's life, even of him that hath assurance, lie not in an assurance I am justified, but in that of adherence only, as I have elsewhere shewn ⁷⁵

The "elsewhere" to which Goodwin refers is his preface to "Christ Set Forth" Goodwin wants the reader to be clear that the sinner is not justified by his humiliation, not even by being weary and heavy-laden, since that was taken by many preparationists as a goal to be attained in preparation for Christ, rather than a present reality in the unregenerate Nor was the sinner to be justified by holy dispositions any more than actions Only an absolute, unconditional promise can generate faith, as the *objectum motivum* "inward works as well as outward" are excluded, to make certain that sanctification is not said to precede justification in the slightest degree Hence, Goodwin does not allow for the use of a syllogism in the first or direct act of faith, but only for the faith of assurance, since the act of faith does not require "any intervening condition unto faith itself, upon the sight of which as a groundwork faith should come to lay hold upon them, but they are exposed barely and nakedly unto faith as objects to be laid hold upon (that is, God and Christ in them) for our salvation" Goodwin adds,

Such qualifications I find set out indeed in the promises for the faith of assurance after a soul's first having believed, as being signs of a man's being in the faith, and of his being justified by his faith foregone But no such qualifications can be or ought to be built upon by one that comes first to Christ, or ought to be ingredients to his first act of justifying faith, nor indeed to any act of true, pure justifying faith as such, for that were to make what is in ourselves after faith to be the foundation of it, and to mingle with it, and to make the first act of faith to be assurance that I am in the state of grace already, and thereupon I do believe that I am saved and justified This assertion our later and more knowing divines have more generally declined, which yet the papists would impose upon us protestants, as an absurdity generally maintained by us, whenas it is the Lutherans only that still do at this day affirm the act of justifying faith to be an assured persuasion that our sins are pardoned ⁷⁶

In Goodwin's mind, an approach that was initially calculated (and still calculated by many Puritans) to help the sinner to faith has become an obstacle to that direct act. Looking to Christ directly, and not to preparations, is essential to justifying faith. He writes, "Consider it now as a truth of very great moment, and which confuteth many errors that run abroad in the world, not only in the hearts of popish divines, but protestants also"⁷⁷

But the fear that the Puritans began to give sanctification priority and perhaps even a causal priority is often linked to the descriptions of faith as a working, active, duty-doing instrument. It is essential, as we read the Puritans, to recall their distinctions, otherwise, we will confuse their meaning. For instance, if we were to read a Puritan remark that makes faith into a working, acting thing, we might conclude (with Kendall, et al.) that this marks a shift from a passive to an active view of faith. But note Perkins' distinction, widely employed: "Faith must be considered two ways: first as a work, quality or virtue, secondly as an instrument or hand *reaching out itself to receive* Christ's merit. And we are justified by faith *not as it is a work, virtue or quality*, but as it is *an instrument to receive and apply* that thing whereby we are justified" (emphasis added)⁷⁸

This distinction is entirely ignored by the leading proponents of the "discontinuity" thesis, and in so doing, Perkins and subsequent Puritans are wrongly charged with redefining justifying faith.

Goodwin eschews any comment that makes it sound as if God justifies on the condition of any preparatory work of his Spirit or of the seeker. "And it is infinite mercy (God having such sums ready and lying by him) to forgive a man all after all, upon one single act of faith," even when "God hath no experience of our good behaviour"⁷⁹. Certainly the Roman notion of preparation

has no basis in Scripture, as Judas himself fulfilled the “papist” notion of repentance and penance. Mistaking natural light for grace is the root of Pelagianism, Goodwin insists,⁸⁰ and whatever view of preparation a Protestant might choose to employ, it must beware of giving the slightest motions and degrees of sanctification any place in justifying, by making any promises of the direct act of faith conditional, or of suggesting that the movements of the “seeker” toward God are rewarded with divine approbation.

In very clear terms, Goodwin denies that preparation precedes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. “Like the wind, ‘ he comes upon men without preparation, and then works all ’⁸¹ When the Holy Spirit comes to regenerate the sinner, he comes “immediately upon us, as we are in our natural condition, in our uncleanness and pollution, without any preparation to make way for his coming upon us, or into us.” Now, this does not mean that there are no endeavours, nor that the sinner does not make use of means before he or she is actually converted, it does mean, however, that the “seeker” is not seeking by nature, but that even this seeking is being produced by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit already. Goodwin observes that God

doth not work grace [sanctification] first, and then come into a man, but he comes first and seizeth a man, then works grace in him. And this the text in Tit. iii. 6 insinuates, when weighing the mercy thereof, the apostle says, ‘He shed his Spirit upon us.’ On us, how qualified? The fourth verse tells us, ‘Us, when disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures.’ [Therefore,] if this were your condition (and it was) what did or could the Spirit find in you, as preparatory and inviting of him thereunto? Absolutely nothing at all.⁸²

This was surely a far cry from the earlier Cotton’s remark, for instance, that “The Spirit will not lodge in an unclean heart.”⁸³ In short, not only did the Father choose us as sinners, and did Christ choose us as we were in ourselves enemies, the Holy Spirit comes upon and into the sinner as unbelieving, hostile, and wicked. Here preparationism of any kind, for all practical intentions, is

excluded from the realm of conversion

For it is entry and possession the Holy Ghost aims at, and it is the first thing he doth, after he hath pulled forth Satan, that was in possession, and bound him, and then, being entered, he throws out his goods and weapons, mortifies corruptions, and sanctifies the heart, and leads the soul into saving truths ⁸⁴

The only preparation that Goodwin will admit is the terror of the Law that drives us to Christ, realizing that we are sinners who need saving ⁸⁵ But here, too, Goodwin is in the mainstream of the tradition. Preston said that humiliation had two parts: passive (which can be found in the unregenerate), and active (the fruit of sanctification). The passive humiliation is simply “a sense of sin and God’s wrath for it” ⁸⁶ It is merely “legal,” as the Spirit enlightens a sinner to understand and feel terror of the Law. The person merely passively or legally humbled “is not humbled for sin, as it is contrary to God, and his holiness, but as contrary to himself and his own good” ⁸⁷ Further, it is fueled by self-love (fear of punishment, hope of reward), as those passively or legally humbled see God as judge rather than as Father. Thus, passive and active humiliation differ in that “The one driveth a man from God, but the other causeth a man to go to God and to seek Christ” ⁸⁸ Humiliation may not be measured by degree of sorrow. Preston notes,

I have spoken these things because some are scrupulous on the point, and think they may not safely apply the promises, because they have not had that measure of sorrow which others have had. But let no man suffer his assurance to be weakened for want of this, for a man may have as high an esteem of Christ, and be so thoroughly convinced of sin, though he want that violent work which God works in some, for faith unites to Christ ⁸⁹

So there again, in Preston, as we see throughout Goodwin’s works, the concern is for faith to make its sight of Christ, unhindered by obstacles. Preston sees searching the heart as a means of coming to despair of ourselves, not of gaining assurance ⁹⁰

At the same time, Preston does accept some form of preparation as useful for attaining

assurance, since assurance is “the reward for exact walking”⁹¹ Kendall is, at least here, warranted to conclude, “The upshot is that we must concentrate on our attitude towards the Law rather than our receiving the righteousness of Christ”⁹² In fact, Kendall offers persuasive evidence of the problems divines such as Goodwin and Owen were confronting, such as the observation of a contemporary concerning Thomas Hooker’s sermons on *The Soul’s Preparation for Christ* “When Mr Hooker preached those Sermons about the Souls preparation for Christ, and Humiliation, my Father-in-Law, Mr Nathaniel Ward, told him Mr Hooker, you make as good Christians before men are in Christ, as ever they are after, and wished, would I were but as good a Christian now, as you make men while they are but preparing for Christ”⁹³ It was just this criticism of preparationism gone awry that Goodwin argues so persuasively⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Kendall does not even allude to the criticism of this practice within the movement itself, by the likes of Goodwin and Owen, nor does he sufficiently distinguish between the preparations necessary for the exercise of faith and the search for assurance in the discussion of preparation

And yet, Goodwin adds, justification and sanctification are inseparable and God does not pardon without renewing “Men think that for God to save them is no more but only to put forth a prerogative act of pardon and shewing mercy, as a king doth when he pardons a traitor, but God always does more, for when he pardons anyone, he makes a friend and favourite of him, a son and heir, in whom he may delight, therefore, together with pardoning him, he also renews him”⁹⁵

One of the most important passages in the debate over preparationism is Luke 18, the story of the rich young ruler who comes to Jesus asking what he must do in order to be saved Jesus asks him if he has kept the Law, and the ruler replies that he has kept it since his youth At this point,

Jesus tells him that he has left one thing undone he should sell everything he has and give it to the poor Now, the two interpretations are readily apparent Either one could say that Christ is very clearly laying out the terms of salvation if one wishes to be saved, he must come to Christ willing to sell everything he has in order to give it to the poor In other words, the rich young ruler's main problem, in walking away disappointed, was that he was not willing to submit completely to Christ's demands

The other interpretation is that the rich young ruler is self-righteous, and this is made plain in his insistence that he had kept the Law from his youth By drawing attention to the deeper, truest meaning of the Law (love for neighbor), Jesus proves to the ruler that he has not truly loved his neighbor after all His pride is insulted and he is unwilling to confess, with the publican in the parable recorded just prior to this story, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner," so that he could go home justified rather than the Pharisee

The reformers insisted upon the second interpretation of this passage, in fact, Calvin offers the former interpretation as one of the principal arrows in the Roman quiver⁹⁶ Goodwin recognizes what Calvin would have called the proper use of the Law in driving sinners to despair "Yet God knew that this [conformity to the law for the Jews] was impracticable by them, but to convince them, he tried them by that offer, as Christ did the young man in the Gospel, when he put him upon keeping the commandments, and there left him"⁹⁷

When Goodwin takes up the subject of the "evangelical motives to obedience," then, he sees the Gospel as the indicative that empowers the believer to obey Not only do extreme forms of preparationism, then, place sanctification before justification, they make the Law the motive for

obedience “Do this and you shall live,” which, as Goodwin stated earlier, places the believer again under the covenant of works and makes John the Baptist the Messiah rather than Christ. Therefore, Goodwin insists that good works always follow faith. “Faith, then, is clearly founded upon no work in us or upon us”⁹⁸. Does that mean that faith does not require any work in us or upon us? Certainly not, since the sinner, dead in sin, must be awakened and turned by God to himself. But it is not founded upon that work--even though that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, “a man clearly and nakedly believes on God without consideration of works”⁹⁹. Not only are the works of the unregenerate inadmissible in the matter of justification, even the works of the Spirit (“no work in us or upon us”) are not able to cooperate or compete with faith. This leads Goodwin to the following conclusion, in sharp contrast to some of the leading preparationists, especially in New England

It is in vain to exhort any to good works till they have first believed. Papists slander our doctrine, that by crying up free grace and faith, we deny good works, and upbraid us, that our doctrine affords not any motives thereto sufficient, and because (forsooth) we do not urge them to that end for which they would have them, namely, to merit heaven, therefore they reproach us that we proceed not upon sufficient grounds. But we do indeed proceed in the right order: first, we teach men to believe on free grace as if there were no works, and then to fall a-doing as if there was no faith to be justified by. ‘that they who believe in God may be careful to maintain good works.’ Yea, we add further, we urge good works upon a higher ground, for a better and more noble end than they can pretend to who assert that we are justified by them. You will say, What is that? It is to glorify God.¹⁰⁰

Part of the problem arises, however, when the Puritans, following the Reformed orthodox generally, placed the new birth before justification. As we have seen, prior to the Westminster Assembly, “sanctification” and “regeneration” were terms that were used interchangeably in the Reformed tradition. This broad definition was still popular in Goodwin’s day, as he himself

accepts their use “ sanctification, whereby is meant the working all the principles of habitual grace (which we call regeneration) by the spirit ”¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, it was generally quite unusual for divines to refer to the regeneration that precedes faith as “sanctification,” because of the usual association of that word with the process of renewal Here, even though Goodwin was able to concede that regeneration and sanctification were synonymous in that limited sense, it is improper to refer to sanctification as prior to justification when the former is normally associated with the process of renovation “But then how the sprinkling of the blood of Christ should be the consequent of sanctification, so is we should in like manner be said to be elected through sanctification unto this sprinkling of Christ’s blood, this contradicts the received opinion, i e , that justification should rather be the medium of sanctification, and in order to go before it ”¹⁰²

Therefore, even in seeking assurance, we are not to settle our gaze on our own graces, but on Christ outside of us These graces may come alongside the promise in order to comfort, but they cannot be our focus This parallels Calvin’s warning in his *Institutes*¹⁰³ After all, when it comes to satisfying the conscience, what can silence its objections but the perfect sacrifice of Christ? Goodwin concludes, “And surely that which hath long ago satisfied God himself for the sins of many thousand souls now in heaven, may very well serve to satisfy the heart and conscience of any sinner now upon earth, in any doubts in respect of the guilt of any sins that can arise ”¹⁰⁴

Those who began their Christian life trusting in their graces will continue to look there first in times of doubt, and, not finding enough to quiet their conscience, will be led into despair Such individuals will be in perpetual “preparation,” assuming that they have not yet attained saving faith simply because they are experiencing the normal struggles of the Christian life But Goodwin

handles such objections, one by one. For instance,

Thirdly, may thy sin be aggravated, in that thou didst commit it with so great delight and greediness, and pouredst out thy heart unto it? Consider that Christ offered himself more willingly than ever thou didst to sin. Fourthly, didst thou sin with much deliberation, when thou mightest have avoided it? There was in this circumstance in Christ's sufferings to answer that, that he knew all he was to suffer, and yet yielded up himself, as John xvii 4. Fifthly, hast thou sinned presumptuously, and made a covenant with death and hell? Christ in like manner offered up himself by a covenant and complot with his Father so to do.¹⁰⁵

Here Goodwin employs a remarkably pastoral use of Christ's imitation. Instead of merely setting Christ before the believer as a sufficient example to follow, he sets before the believer Christ as a sufficient substitute to trust. After all, Christ's obedience is greater than the believer's sin, his love, greater than the believer's hatred, his zeal for the Lord's house, greater than the believer's apathy and lukewarmness. Therefore, the condition of the believer, either before or after conversion, is not to be the focus of interest. To suggest that preparation makes us worthy to receive Christ or the Holy Spirit is to substitute John the Baptist for Christ, as Goodwin argued above.

Similar to the debate over the Spirit's sealing was the debate over whether there was a distinction between the Holy Spirit's "coming upon us" (viz., in preparation) and his "dwelling in us" (viz., regeneration). Goodwin flatly denies any substance to the distinction between the Spirit's coming upon seekers and dwelling in the regenerate, "as some have evangelised."¹⁰⁶ Following Calvin's interest in union with Christ, Goodwin insists that in the case of both Christ and the Holy Spirit, the person goes before his graces. This is a key distinction. Does the Holy Spirit send various graces (faith, love, new obedience, humiliation) into the seeker's soul before he

takes up residence, preparing the heart to receive his holy presence? Or does he come into a sinful heart and begin to make it hospitable to his indwelling presence? According to Goodwin, the Holy Spirit dwells *with*, not *by* his graces¹⁰⁷ The Samaritan woman had no thirst for the Holy Spirit, but he was “poured on dry ground,” upon sinners like her “that hath not so much as a desire or thirst after this Holy Spirit, to ask him, as she had not ”¹⁰⁸

Even here, we should not see Goodwin as an enigma, or as an exception in the “Calvin versus the Calvinists” debate We must remember, after all, that it was Tyndale who argued that true faith is not only “without deserving and merits,” but, “yea, and without seeking for of us ”¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

We have seen that even within the general agreement on monergism and the absolute and unconditional nature of the promises related to justifying faith, there is nevertheless a great deal of variety on matters of pastoral practise By Goodwin’s time, there was reason to be worried that a heavy emphasis on “preparation unto grace” was leading to conclusions, however, that were going to lead necessarily to doctrinal departures from the Reformed system namely, the acceptance of synergism and placing sanctification before justification While willing to affirm a type of preparation that was concerned with endeavouring to *believe* (by hearing the Word and by not refusing the humiliation that comes from the Law), Goodwin would not allow any form that led individuals to trust in their own works or even in the work of the Holy Spirit as a direct act of faith The stress on the conditional side of the covenant was beginning to buckle and Goodwin is among those seeking to redress the imbalance

Because he is guided, therefore, by an objective focus on Christ as the justifier of the ungodly,

Goodwin does not allow the sort of preparationism that would in any way orient either the faith of recumbency or even the faith of assurance to the conditional emphasis in which he saw some preparationists moving. And what is the relation of all 'of this to assurance? Surely if one's objective acceptance before God depended in any degree on the work of the Holy Spirit prior to faith, one would be back in the dilemma of the Roman system. Inherent righteousness is to be the fruit, but not the cause or even a condition of imputed righteousness. Therefore, even the faith of assurance must somehow find its foundation on the righteousness of Christ imputed, and not on the work of the Spirit within the human heart, forming the *habitus* of the new obedience. In our next chapter, we shall see just how important this defense was to Goodwin's discussion of perseverance and assurance.

Notes to Chapter Nine

1 Goodwin, 4 346, *A Discourse on the Glory of the Gospel*

2 *ibid*

3 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 19 9

4 Goodwin, 4 346

5 *ibid*

6 William K B Stoeber, *op cit*, p 194

7 *ibid*

8 *ibid*

9 *ibid*, p 196

10 John Bradford, *Works, op cit*, 1 316

11 *ibid*

12 We see an example in John Owen's Preface to volume six of his *Works*

13 Ian Breward, introduction to Perkins' *Works*, p 96

14 Kendall cites Beza as the author of the distinction between two conversions, but this is found in Bucer's *Reign of Christ*. Even Calvin can be found to employ the older terminology in chapter fourteen of the *Institutes*, with the heading, "The Beginning of Justification and Its Continual Progress." Throughout the section on justification, the reformer distinguishes between the once-and-for-all declaration of justification and the Roman confusion of justification with the process of renewal. And yet, "first" and "second justification," and similar medieval categories are occasionally employed, but not with the same intention as in the medieval theology. Cf

- Kendall, *op cit*, p 19
- 15 *ibid*
- 16 R T Kendall, *op cit*, pp 37 ff
- 17 William Perkins, *Works, op cit*, p 527
- 18 *ibid*, p 156
- 19 Perkins, *A Commentary on Galatians* (New York The Pilgrim Press, 1989, facsimile of 1617 edition), p 119
- 20 David D Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, op cit*, "Sixteen Questions," pp 43-77
- 21 *ibid*
- 22 *ibid*
- 23 Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes, op cit* p 190
- 24 Perkins, *A Commentary on Galatians, op cit*, p 119-120
- 25 *ibid*
- 26 Cf Joseph Alleine, *A Sure Guide to Heaven* (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1989, reprint from 1671 edition)
- 27 Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Doubting Believer* (Ligonier, PA Soli Deo Gloria, 1993, reprinted from 1819 D Chalmers edition), pp 102-3
- 28 *ibid*
- 29 *ibid*
- 30 Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (Cambridge Harvard, 1939) and *From Colony to Province* (Cambridge Harvard, 1953), especially pp 253-89
- 31 Obadiah Sedgwick, *op cit*, p 103
- 32 Richard Baxter, *Catholick Theologie Plain, Pure, Peaceable For Pacification of the Dogmatical Word-Warriours* (London Robert White, 1675), pp 219-222
- 33 *ibid*
- 34 *ibid*
- 35 *ibid*
- 36 *ibid*
- 37 *ibid*
- 38 *ibid*
- 39 *ibid*, p 225
- 40 *ibid*, p 233
- 41 *ibid*, p 239
- 42 *ibid*, p 241
- 43 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 12, Section 1
- 44 *ibid*, p 254
- 45 *ibid*, p 245
- 46 John Owen, preface to volume 6 of *Works*, cf Thomas Goodwin's vol 4 346
- 47 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 15, Sections 2-3
- 48 Goodwin, 4 472
- 49 6 58-72
- 50 *ibid*, p 190
- 51 8 473
- 52 6 359 ff
- 53 4 473
- 54 *ibid*
- 55 4 346
- 56 4 473

- 57 *ibid*
- 58 4 520-22
- 59 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 11, Section 1
- 60 Cf Martin Bucer, *De Regno Christi*, in the Library of Christian Classics, William Pauck, ed (Philadelphia Westminster, 1969)
- 61 *ibid*
- 62 Calvin, Romans 6 13, *op cit*, p 129
- 63 R T Kendall, *op cit*, pp 208 ff
- 64 The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 9 and 10
- 65 *ibid*, Chapter 10, Section 1
- 66 Goodwin, 8 246
- 67 *ibid*
- 68 *ibid*
- 69 Perkins, *A Commentary on Galatians*, *op cit*, p 106
- 70 Goodwin, 8 247
- 71 *ibid*
- 72 *ibid*
- 73 *ibid*
- 74 *ibid*
- 75 *ibid*
- 76 *ibid*
- 77 4 11-13
- 78 Perkins, *Works*, *op cit*, p 547
- 79 Goodwin, 6 94
- 80 6 245, 248
- 81 6 43
- 82 6 60
- 83 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 115, is referring to John Cotton's *Way of Life* cited in Kendall, p 115, from Cotton's *Way of Life*
- 84 *ibid*
- 85 John Preston, *Golden Sceptre*, *op cit*, pp 68-71
- 86 *ibid*, pp 74-5
- 87 *ibid*
- 88 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 86
- 89 *ibid*, p 125 Kendall states, "The experimental predestinarian tradition has reached in John Preston a stage that makes the doctrine of predestination itself virtually pointless, it has become a mere theory The decrees of predestination undoubtedly lie behind the motivation for being in the covenant, but the practical effect in the *ordo salutis* is one which seems divorced from the doctrine of election and effectual calling The result is that preparation for faith becomes repentance, which, in turn assures The consequence is an interest in godliness more than God," p 123-4 However, as we have seen, if "preparation" is synonymous with "repentance," and this is nothing more than the work of the Law in bringing the sinner to humiliation and a recognition that his own righteousness is still sinful in part, this is hardly a diversion from Calvin's thought, indeed, this is precisely the Law-Gospel motif in Luther and Calvin Goodwin's criticisms, therefore, are more precise and cogent than Kendall's, since he is concerned with the emphasis on this "Law-work" as the object of either faith or assurance It is a *non sequitur* for Kendall to conclude from this idea (i e, "preparation for faith becomes repentance, which, in turn assures") that, "The consequence is in an interest in godliness more than God" This may well have been the practice among some Puritans, but it does not follow from Kendall's premises

- 90 Goodwin, 6 84, cf 122
- 91 *ibid*
- 92 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 119
- 93 *ibid*, p 125
- 94 *ibid*
- 95 *ibid*
- 96 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 18 9
- 97 Goodwin, 7 24
- 98 7 234
- 99 *ibid*
- 100 *ibid*
- 101 7 536
- 102 7 537 ff
- 103 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 13 3-5
- 104 Goodwin, 7 234
- 105 4 21-3
- 106 *ibid*
- 107 6 62-5 Also see p 69
- 108 8 43
- 109 Tyndale, *Works, op cit*, 1 53

Chapter Ten

Assurance, Temporary Faith, and the Perseverance of Justifying Faith

When it comes to the question of assurance, nothing can be as relevant as the question of whether regeneration and justification may be lost. The Reformed tradition adopted a strict Augustinian interpretation of “falling away,”¹ and adapted it to the federal scheme. It was certainly not the case that the Reformed believed that mere *assensus* guaranteed perseverance and final salvation.² In fact, baptism communicates a particular gift of grace to every child of the covenant, but there are many who, like the unbelieving generation in the desert, refuse to combine the hearing of the Gospel with faith.³ These are refused “entry to the land.” This, of course, was the very comparison employed by the writer to the Hebrews, warning early Christians against apostasy, and the Puritans saw in it a pristine definition of the covenant of grace. Furthermore, the Reformed emphasized the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work in some, but not in others, through the means of grace. In other words, although the Spirit works through means, he is not required to do so in every case.

While Lutherans and Roman Catholics might interpret apostasy as the extinguishing of the light of true, saving faith, and would be forced to conclude that a person, once regenerated, could return to his or her former condition, the Puritans insisted that this was tantamount to synergism and a denial of effectual grace.⁴ Justification, regeneration, any advances in the Christian life, adoption, reconciliation, all of the gifts of union with Christ would eventually be lost if God did not preserve this union by his Spirit through the ordained means.⁵

This did not mean that the Reformed believed that one could exercise justifying faith and then cease believing at some point, but be finally saved in spite of unbelief. Rather, they insisted that the same God who gave a person the faith to believe gives that person the faith to persevere, and that the faith that justifies is also a faith that produces fruit.⁶ The problem arises, however, when we see a person who really did seem to exercise genuine, saving faith. This person made a sound profession of faith, received the sacraments, faithfully attended the preaching of the Word, confessed his sins, and exhibited genuine graces. Are we to say that this person never did really exercise justifying faith? Was it mere assent--“the faith of devils,” or was it genuine trust? And if it was the latter, how could it be possible for a reprobate person to exercise the same type of faith as the elect? Ultimately, the question would have to arise, How useful could the practical syllogism really be if temporary and justifying faith are so difficult to distinguish? These were the issues raised as the successors to Calvin on the continent and in England wrestled with their doctrine of perseverance and although they may have wrestled at greater length, it was Calvin who first made these issues prominent and planted the seeds for further reflection and elaboration.

Temporary Faith

Briefly stated, the doctrine of temporary faith held that one could truly believe, but just as the seed that fell among the weeds was eventually choked, so too the faith of some is extinguished.⁷ It is intriguing that John Goodwin (1593-1665), an Arminian Puritan, contended against the doctrine of the saint's final perseverance because of concerns over the anxiety that such a notion will produce in the hearts of the average believer.⁸ Thomas Goodwin explains his namesake's difficulty

Mr Goodwin indeed contends, chap ix sect 8-11, pp 108-110, 'That if we judge all such as fall away to perdition never to have been true believers it will administer a thousand fears and jealousies concerning the soundness of a man's own faith, whether that be sound or no, and so it will be indifferent as to consolation whether true believers may fall away or no, seeing it is altogether uncertain whether a man hath any of that true faith which cannot perish'⁹

At least in John Goodwin's case, it was not predestination that produced anxiety, but perseverance. If those who fall away never were really believers, how can one explain their lively profession and sound use of the means of grace? Surely, if exemplary members of the Christian community may feign true faith, how may I be certain that I am not also? In the light of such questioning, Thomas Goodwin could very easily have taken the track of introspection, advising an elaborate system of judging motives, affections, graces, and habits. Instead, he takes what has now become for him a predictable measure—making the entire question hinge on whether one has truly looked to Christ alone as the justifier of the ungodly.¹⁰ According to this divine, those who fall away are not first and foremost those who, through some challenge, ordeal of physical suffering, or struggle with sin, end up casting away their faith in Christ. For Goodwin, the chief reason why people fall away is that they see something in themselves, with Christ, as a ground for their acceptance before God.¹¹ Goodwin reminds the reader that the Law is easy to hear by nature, and regeneration has actually improved this so that the believer is more ready to hear and obey the Law than before. But this positive effect of the new birth has a potential down-side in that it makes it easier for the Christian to lean on it rather than on the Gospel.¹² The effects of faith end up gradually being confused with the ground. If, then, there are "temporary believers," is it possible to distinguish it from real faith? Can one be certain that he or she has exercised true

saving faith? Goodwin offers a number of distinguishing marks

1 First, temporary believers receive the Spirit merely as a Sovereign. In 2 Peter 2:1, where heretics are said to have “denied the Sovereign Lord who bought them,” Goodwin argues, in keeping with a particular redemption, that because the Lord here is called *despotes* (from which we get “despot”) rather than “redeemer” or “saviour,” Jesus Christ “bought” these individuals purely in the sense of dominion and authority.¹³ Similarly, he uses this reference of the Holy Spirit, who comes to the temporary believer merely as a ruler, not as a redeemer. Thus far the first mark: the temporary believer relates to God as a slave to a master, not as a son to a father.¹⁴ One detects throughout Goodwin’s description of temporary believers an emphasis on an improper object or manner of apprehending that object, rather than an emphasis on the nature of the graces and habits exhibited. The temporary believers are under a covenant of works, and this becomes clear in their faith and practice,¹⁵ and eventually the Spirit withdraws.¹⁶ A true believer will show genuine goodwill, false ones “have gifts from him as a lord, but not his image as from a father, and so are never said to be begotten.”¹⁷ The true believer is a freed slave who is now part of the household, whereas a temporary believer is a runaway slave who may pretend to belong to the household, but lives in fearful expectation of being discovered by the Law.¹⁸

2 Second, a true believer rejoices more in glimpses of God’s grace and favour than in heaven, rewards, and eternal life itself. This, too, becomes clear in how a person expresses his or her faith.¹⁹ Does the person seem to be more interested in heaven and rewards than in God, Christ, the cross, justification, and grace?²⁰ The true believer will be apt to consider that he may be only a temporary believer during moments in which he is withdrawn and the effects of his operations are

not as plain, but Goodwin counsels against a hasty conclusion “The Holy Ghost comes to some as a wayfaring man, for a night But do you not feel that though he may withdraw many effects, yet still his person is in you, and works, even amidst your sinnings, to reduce you again to God ”²¹ It is “not upon a covenant of works, but of grace ”²² Therefore, one must entreat with God as a son, not a fearful slave, “ and if upon these terms thou holdest and retainest the Spirit, thou art a son ”²³ A false Christian confesses his sins, but for fear of punishment, not out of sorrow for having offended a merciful and holy God ²⁴ A true believer acknowledges with Psalm 51, “against you only have I sinned ”

3 Third, the true believer understands something of the goodness of God, whereas temporary believers may see him as just, holy, wrathful, pure, omnipotent, etc , but not understand his goodness “Hath he shewed and manifested himself to thee, Jn xiv 20, if not in assurance of his love to thee, yet in the goodness that is in himself”²⁵ Counterfeit sanctification, which is really what temporary faith entails, can account for experiences and appearances that can be exceedingly deceptive even to the mature Christian The conscience may be elevated by the Word and the Spirit, there may be a supernatural light in matters of faith, so that the things which are beyond the capability of natural reason, conscience, and will, are understood with divine assistance ²⁶ But the problem, Goodwin observes, is that the conscience is still--even after conversion, the seat of the covenant of works among all of the human faculties Faith is the seat of the covenant of grace ²⁷ Therefore, it is at the point of conscience where it is the most difficult to distinguish a real from a temporary believer However, it is best detected in the tendency to either turn the Gospel of grace into license or into a new Law ²⁸ The natural light of conscience can do a great deal, there is still

a good deal of light that shines through the broken mirror of the *imago Dei*,²⁹ as Calvin also argued. Furthermore, natural zeal can accomplish a great deal, and legal zeal (a zeal motivated by fear of punishment and hope of rewards) even more.³⁰ The temporary believer is habitually confusing the Law and the Gospel, and this is a most likely sign of its defect.³¹

It must be noted, therefore, that for Goodwin, the emphasis in distinguishing temporary from persevering faith falls not on outward signs or evidences so much as on whether the object is Christ as he is offered in the covenant of grace. Goodwin is most vitally concerned to point people to Christ directly, not to point them to assurance, nor to evidences, nor to graces, but to Christ, “nakedly and barely considered” as the justifier of the ungodly.³² But Goodwin takes this a step further. Instead of using this doctrine as a new law, to threaten the believers into obedience by the lingering fear that their faith may not be fully formed, he is quick to set forth what must *not* be taken as evidence for temporary faith. The average Christian may assume from such a notion, I have not exactly been walking uprightly and my love for the Lord is not as great as it used to be perhaps I have temporary faith, but this is not a mark of a temporary believer, Goodwin insists, in an effort to distinguish what temporary faith is *not*.

1 First, temporary faith is not necessarily detected “by a great decay of what affections, and perhaps some principles of strictness you had at first, now much decayed and lessened,” since the writer to the Hebrews tells the believers to “call to remembrance” (Heb 10:32), because believers do forget.³³

2 “Nor are you to judge of yourselves by a comparison of appearance made of yourselves, with some you have known or read of in the word.”³⁴ This is “an uncertain rule.”³⁵ There are always

better people who do not have faith and worse people who do. Goodwin tries to talk his auditors and readers out of despair instead of trying to make them doubt. “Cast not thy confidence away in such a cast.”³⁶ The counsel is to hold on to Christ, not to one’s signs of grace. And yet, signs of grace (such as remembering God’s love for us and ours for him), cheer us in that confidence. “It is unto the way of renewing their faith that he directs them,” since “to enter into rest is to believe.”³⁷

Therefore, in this matter of distinguishing true from temporary faith, which in many ways is identical to the search for the faith of assurance, Goodwin insists that the believer must not trust even his or her best fruit.³⁸ The believer must not make assurance to rest on comparisons with one’s past performances or the performances of others. Sanctification is a matter of faith alone as truly as justification. True believers “depend at length for sanctification in working as well as for justification, upon Christ.”³⁹ The enlightenment of temporary believers is merely moral, not spiritual, and the Galatians, who claimed to have trusted at first in Christ, but then fell back into the covenant of works, illustrate the danger of such false faith. Temporary believers, then, are not hypocrites: their works are truly performed, but from the moral effects of Christ who “enlightenes every man” (John 1:9).⁴⁰ This civil righteousness, “when gentiles do by nature the things in the law” (Ro 2), may often be confused with spiritual righteousness. But the difference between temporary and true believers is not the size or quantity of the works, but the goal. “For holiness is a setting up God as the supreme end, or it is not holiness, so until then self-love is the predominate principle.”⁴¹ In the temporary believers, even though, outwardly, there is no observable difference in the work.⁴¹ Goodwin believes that this is the “form of godliness” whose power is denied,

according to the apostle Paul

Genuine faith is determined, not by free will, but by free grace, Goodwin maintains, and the particular act of free grace that creates true faith is regeneration, if it is distinguished from sanctification. Goodwin argues that the way to true faith is to first recognize the terrifying chord struck by the Law's judgments, and here he sees the pedagogical use of the Law as of prime importance, since "it was promulgated with evangelical purpose to drive men to Christ." Even for the people of God, the Law's chief purpose is still to drive them to Christ. "And Joshua, at the same time when the covenant was renewed, intimates to them that the purpose of that covenant was not as if they could do anything of it, but to shew them rather their inability."⁴² Throughout, Goodwin leans heavily on this pedagogical use of the Law.⁴³ When this happens, the sinner is humbled. Next, faith is granted,⁴⁴ and he adopts the definition of Luther, who "calls this righteousness of faith a passive righteousness and faith a mere receiving grace."⁴⁵ Following faith is repentance.⁴⁶ John 16:7-11 lays this out, Goodwin observes: the Holy Spirit will (1) convince of sin, (2) convince of righteousness (justification), and convince of judgment (sanctification).⁴⁷ As for every doctrine, the notion of the temporary believer has "uses." It is useful "to awaken dull professors to consider their estate," and "to quicken them to holiness." But its chief use is to exalt the grace of God.

This doctrine exalts and magnifies the grace of God toward us, as that which hath put so vast a difference between man and man in things that are so like to true grace, and that make men come so near to the kingdom of God. Who caused thee to differ (says the apostle) from another? Judas had a work upon him as well as Peter or the rest of the apostles, what put the difference? God's free grace.⁴⁸

According to Goodwin, the human tendency is to confuse pagan virtue and right reason with godliness. “Yet, so impudent hath the devil been, that he hath revived this, we see, in our days, in Quakers, yea, and caused them blasphemously to call this ‘Christ within them.’” The Law for the Jews is “like physic in a dead man’s body,”⁴⁹ but this is just as true for anyone who relies on works-righteousness. This doctrine of the temporary believer, then, exalts God’s grace by pointing out the differences between a false faith, of which pagans are capable, and a true faith. Goodwin states the following of temporary believers: “1. They do not see spiritual things in their spiritual nature.” For instance, they see salvation “as freedom from hell and the like,” similar to those who followed Jesus (John 6), but could not understand the spiritual intent of his message. Genuine faith “sees” Christ in all his glory (which is to say, in his office as justifier of the ungodly), as sufficient satisfaction for sin, and it also “sees” Christ’s gracious will.⁵⁰

The discontinuity thesis explains the notion of temporary faith as one link in a chain of departures from Calvin’s christocentric, evangelical orientation to a more works-oriented system. Indeed, Kendall even argues that Arminius’s doctrine of falling away, along with his doctrine of faith in general, is identical to the Puritan notion of temporary faith.⁵¹ But clearly Goodwin, and many Puritans of a similar mind, argued for this doctrine with the contrary motives. It must be noted, first, that Calvin did embrace a notion of temporary faith, which he called an “*inferio Spiritus operatio*” in the reprobate,⁵² and Goodwin cites him for support.⁵³ The notion of temporary faith is a challenge, but Goodwin’s determination to raise their faith to Christ is evident in one of his most passionate sections of the volume on the Holy Spirit: Answering the

objection of those who conclude from the practical syllogism, in the light of this notion of temporary faith, that they produce more thorns and thistles than fruit, Goodwin writes

So hath every regenerate man a world of thorns in him ay (says Calvin), thick-set copses of them Every one's grace is sown and continues amongst a wood of thorns Yea, but yet there is another root of something that grows up in thy heart, that is not thorns, and there is a conflict against the thorns, an endeavour to stub them up, and they are thorns in thy side Therefore there is another principle in thee *Obj 2* Thou wilt again say; I do not grow by reason of these thorns But comfort thyself (says Calvin), for he that brought forth the thirty-fold is by Christ reckoned with him that brought forth the hundred-fold *Obj 3* But you will object, Alas! my affections were mightily flushed at first, and now they wither, and worldly lusts grow up in their stead *Ans* Shall I yet say to thee? Doth God maintain a conflict in thee against sin, an endeavour to stub up the thorns? Dost thou water those roots of bitterness with bitter tears and sorow, and with the blood of Christ, to kill them? Then still the root of the matter remains in thee Again, consider, when thou wert first converted to God, as thou hadst grace in thee, so thou wert a temporary believer at first, in respect of thy unregenerate part All was stirred at first, corrupt self-love was stirred at first, as well as what was truly gracious, and when all was stirred, there must needs be a great flush of affection

At first, half thy heart, thy unregenerate part, was turned a temporary believer too, and self-love, the great Simon Magus in thee, was wrought upon, and became a temporary believer, but yet besides, and over and beyond that, there was a little fountain opened in thy heart, and this continues still to flow, when the land-flood ceases, and then look, what is true grace indeed holds out the conflict against itself in worldly lusts, and bears alone the stress of all, and then worldly lusts begin to content purely with this little grace in us, and that fights it out alone, and then is the truer trial of grace, though less discernible to sense than it was at first 54

The work of grace in true believers differs from that which is in temporary believers in that the former is founded on the covenant of grace, and the latter on a covenant of works True faith recognizes "Christ as its root for sanctification, as well as its Saviour for justification" 55 Further, Goodwin insists that God does not reject the temporary believer because of a lack of works or because the faith was not "fully formed" by charity (as in Rome's view), but precisely because he or she is trusting in these attainments of the flesh, "though never so strict or high"

For they will never come off to receive God and his grace upon his own terms, nor set up God's banners of his free grace to them, and of sincere love to him, upon their turrets above self, and so by degrees the Lord withdraws his treaties from them, and they by degrees become revolters from him, and in the end return to some of their own rebellions, upon which God says, 'Which

covenant and treaty they brake, and I regarded them not ' [These] never had true grace God hereby makes way to confound the corrupt doctrinal opinions that men have of grace All Pelagian, semi-Pelagian and Jesuitical doctrines and all Arminian tenets about converting grace, have in their several proportions arisen from what men in their own experience have taken to be true workings of grace in their souls, or else from the pride of carnal wisdom, whereby men of learning and parts think to understand this 56

In fact, the Arminian doctrine regarding conversion is "but a copy of the model taken from the experience of a temporary work," the seed falling on stony ground 57 Many true believers run into serious sins while their faith and repentance are still functioning, while many temporary believers resist temptation outwardly, but have no root of genuine faith and repentance As for the Arminians, says Goodwin, it is "their diana of free-will" that shapes and determines every doctrine in their system, but Goodwin argues that the sinner needs regeneration, not assistance 58 The human will may feign faith for a while, but it will eventually return to its proper sphere It is "like a drop of water upon a board, which if you gently put your hot and dry finger to, and then as softly lift it, it will a while cleave and rise up, but if but a little farther, it falls down again to its own centre "59

At least for Goodwin, this doctrine of temporary faith is not due to scholastic, metaphysical speculation, nor to mitigate the strictness of predestination, but to refute confidence in human ability, be such works "never so strict or high "60 In this way, "God doth but make way for the triumph of his grace over the proud conceits of self "61 At the last day, the true believers will be witnesses to the superiority of grace over nature "And then must all men fall down and acknowledge that it was the grace of God alone could save "62

In fact, it is this same passage upon which Calvin calls in his discussion of temporary faith in

the reprobate⁶³ In the judgment of the reprobate, they do not differ at all from the elect, indeed, their experience is almost identical, and Hebrews six is cited, where the writer concedes that “temporary believers” “have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come” (Heb 6 4-5)⁶⁴ Christ himself, Calvin observes, stated that there are those who possess “faith for a time ” This possession of faith is “not because they firmly grasp the force of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith, but because the Lord, to render them more convicted and inexcusable, steals into their minds to the extent that his goodness may be tasted without the Spirit of adoption ”⁶⁵ But Calvin is not less aware than the Puritans of the pastoral question this raises In reply to the question, How then may I have any assurance that I am not merely “tasting without the Spirit of adoption”?, Calvin writes,

I reply although there is a great likeness and affinity between God’s elect and those who are given a transitory faith, yet only in the elect does that confidence flourish which Paul extols, that they loudly proclaim Abba, Father Therefore, as God regenerates only the elect with incorruptible seed forever, so that the seed of life sown in their hearts may never perish, thus he firmly seals the gift of his adoption in them that it may be steady and sure⁶⁶

Thus, in its very nature, transitory faith does not carry with it the filial love and loyalty of a true son, nor is it lasting “But this does not at all hinder that lower working of the Spirit [*inferio Spiritus operatio*] from taking its course even in the reprobate ”⁶⁷ And what are true believers to do in order to comfort themselves in their possession of genuine, saving faith? “In the meantime, believers are taught to examine themselves carefully and humbly, lest the confidence of the flesh creep in and replace assurance of faith ”⁶⁸

In view of such remarks, one wonders how a chasm can be drawn between Calvin and his successors on this matter. As with the covenantal theme and the extent of the atonement, temporary faith is certainly emphasized in a manner that one does not find in the Genevan reformer, but the idea is seminal enough in Calvin's work to lead one to conclude that his continental and Puritan successors were simply fleshing out the implications of his own system.⁶⁹

But it is vital that we see Goodwin's approach to the question (like Calvin's, upon whose writings he is noticeably dependent throughout the discussion) in terms of bringing assurance to those who are questioning the verity of their faith, not as a means of bringing them to despair. This is why Goodwin labors the distinctions between temporary and real believers for thirty-five pages.⁷⁰ The issue is not the amount of works or their outward good, but a qualitative difference—the kind of fruit.⁷¹ In the case of the temporary believer, it is not a matter of the fruit not attaining to good or perfection, they are corrupt at the root. Nor is civil righteousness the same as spiritual godliness.⁷² This is what distinguishes the Puritan notion from Arminian moralism—it is not about the improvement of nature, but about the triumph of grace, and distinguishing one from the other. Temporary believers are without fruit, but instead bring forth thorns.⁷³ Before the Fall, the human heart was a Paradise of fruit-bearing, but afterward, a cursed ground.⁷⁴ This also helps believers who do not always experience showers of blessing: "He prays and goes to bed, and it may be in the morning finds some dew upon his heart. Now wilt thou comfort thyself, though thy work goes on but gently, yet it goes on surely. There is a still work that doth not make a noise, when some that are far greater works decay, and like a land-flood dry up."⁷⁵ Goodwin adds responses to the objections likely to be raised by anxious consciences.

Obj I can't keep the world out on the Sabbath *Ans* Don't judge by the noise around you 'The imagination of man's heart is evil continually' And it is certain that the bulk or quantity of the unregenerate part in most Christians is far more and greater than the regenerate part, though that be a major virtue, greater in power, carrying the heart on against corruptions, and strong steering a man in his course ⁷⁶

The question is whether these lusts "lodge, nest, and find the most pleasing welcome and harbour? lodge as thy best friends and pleasant companions, that lie down with thee, when thou liest down to sleep, and thou invitest them to bed with thee, that talk with thee, when thou awakest, with deepest pleasure and delight?"⁷⁷ Although external marks are not to have a decisive role, the desire to bring others to a saving knowledge of Christ is a chief encouragement to a true believer ⁷⁸ Goodwin is convinced that the weakest believer can answer these questions with a clear conscience. It is not the strength of one's faith, nor the abundance of one's fruit, but the truth of one's faith and the existence of the root of spiritual life.

Faith & Perseverance

Once more, Goodwin emphasizes that not even faith ought to be allowed to obscure the sight of Christ. For weak believers, "suited to the lowest faith of the weakest believer, who cannot put forth any act of assurance, and is likewise discouraged from coming unto Christ," there are the following comforts. "1. A definition of faith, and such as will suit the weakest believer, is a coming unto God by Christ for salvation. (1) It is a coming to be saved. Let not the want of assurance that God will save thee, or that Christ is thine, discourage thee, if thou hast but a heart to come to God by Christ to be saved, though thou knowest not whether he will yet save thee or no."⁷⁹ The believer should not aim at faith, but at Christ. ⁸⁰

Not only should the lack of assurance not lead to despair, the doctrine of election is for

comfort and must not be made a stumbling block to faith. The soul knows, Goodwin writes, how absurd it is to try to secure its election, since that decision was made in eternity past. Further, since the work of Christ is past as well, the soul may conclude that “what is done is done, and I cannot *become* one for whom Christ died, either he died for me or not,” but Goodwin points out,

There is this one work that remains still to be done by him for us, and which he is daily a-doing, and that is, interceding, for he lives ever to intercede or to pray for us, in the strength and merit of that his sacrifice once offered up. This therefore is more directly and peculiarly fitted unto a faith of recumbency, or of coming unto Christ, the proper act of such a faith (as it is distinguished from faith of assurance) being a casting one’s self upon Christ for something it would have done or wrought for one.⁸¹

Strong faith can look to the cross, but weak faith may need to hear about the intercession at length as well.⁸² Again we see that where Goodwin could easily have directed uncertain believer chiefly to the graces, he instead refers them immediately to the objective work of Christ in heaven. This would seem to suggest that the practical syllogism and the recognition of temporary faith does not preclude a christocentric emphasis. Even here, where one might have expected a deeply introspective interest, Goodwin insists on riveting the attention of the believer on some activity of Christ the Mediator rather than on some effect of faith. The strength of even the weakest faith lies not in its own nature or value, but in the fact that Christ is the one who daily prays that it will not fail. His lively intercession is the believer’s hope for genuine faith.

And if thy soul yet feareth the difficulty of its own particular case, in respect of the greatness of thy sins, and the circumstances thereof, or any consideration whatsoever, which to thy view doth make thy salvation an hard suit to obtain the apostle therefore further adds, ‘He is able to save to the utmost,’ whatever thy cause be, and this through this his intercession. lift up thy eyes and look to the utmost thou canst see, and Christ by his intercession is able to save thee beyond the

horizon and furthest compass of thy thoughts, even 'to the utmost' and worst case the heart of man can suppose. It is not thy having lain long in sin, long under terrors and despairs, or having sinned often after many enlightenings, that can hinder thee from being saved by Christ.⁸³

Such remarks point up the reality of anxiety on the part of many that may have been due to an emphasis in preaching on the difficulty of faith rather than on the objective work of Christ, a concern of both Owen and Goodwin, as previously demonstrated. Against the supposition that one's remaining corruption was a sign of sinning against enlightenment, Goodwin declares the following:

Again, consider but what it is that Christ, who hath by his death done enough to save thee, doth yet further for thee in heaven. If thou thoughtest thou hadst all the saints in heaven and earth jointly concurring in promoting thy salvation, and competitors unto God in instant and incessant requests and prayers to save thee, how wouldst thou be encouraged? Shall I tell thee? One word out of Christ's mouth (who is the King of saints) will do more than all in heaven and earth can do, and what is there then which we may not hope to obtain through his intercession? And wouldst thou know whether he hath undertaken thy cause, and begun to intercede for thee? In a word, Hath he put his Spirit into thy heart, and set thy own heart on work to make incessant intercessions for thyself 'with groans unutterable' (as the apostle hath it, Rom viii)? This is the echo of Christ's intercession for thee in heaven.⁸⁴

It is Christ, at God's right hand, who sends the Holy Spirit from the divine throne, for the purpose of "echoing" in the believer's heart the intercession that is taking place in heaven, external and objective to the believer's experience. And yet, the soul may conclude that perhaps sins may not keep its faith from being genuine, but fears the residual unbelief will stand in the way.

And lastly, if such a soul shall further object, but will he not give over suing for me? May I not be cast out of his prayers through my unbelief? Let it here be considered that he lives 'ever' to intercede, and therefore, if he once undertake thy cause, and getteth thee into his prayers, he will never leave thee out, night nor day. He intercedeth ever, til he hath accomplished and finished thy salvation. Only, whilst I am thus raising up your faith to him upon the work of his intercession for us, let me speak a word to you for him, so to stir up your love to him, upon the consideration of this his intercession also.⁸⁵

His emphasis on the particularism of the covenant does not keep Goodwin from making direct evangelical announcements in order bring peace to the conscience

You see you have the whole life of Christ, first and last, both here and in heaven, laid out for you. He had not come to earth but for you, he had no other business here. 'Unto us a Son is born.' And, to be sure, he had not died but for you. 'For us a Son was given,' and when he rose, it was 'for your justification.' And now he is gone to heaven, he lives but to intercede for you. He makes your salvation his constant calling. O therefore, let us live wholly unto him, for he hath and doth live wholly unto us. You have his whole time among you, and if he were your servant, you could desire no more. There was much of your time lost before you began to live to him, but there hath been no moment of his time which he hath not lived to, and improved for you. Nor are you able ever to live for him but only in this life, for hereafter you shall live with him, and be glorified of him. I conclude all with that of the apostle, 'The love of Christ it should constrain us,' because we cannot but 'judge' this to be the most equal, that 'they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again,' and (out of the text I also add) 'sits at God's right hand,' yea, and there 'lives for ever to make intercession for us.'⁸⁶

We cannot come to believe that Christ is sufficient for our initial acceptance before God, but that our subsequent standing is then left up to us

As if he had said, says he, God cannot come to enjoy and possess his chosen as his inheritance, otherwise than by pardoning their sins continually, for man's frailty is such that they would, after his receiving pardon, fall from that grace, if they be not continually reconciled to him, which concerns us Gentiles as well as them then. God must not only take us to be his, but keep us to be his, and continue to be merciful to us, according to this his great name, or we shall be utterly lost and undone.⁸⁷

Falling Short of Faith

If temporary faith is compared to the seed that fell among the weeds and was choked, why was it that this faith did not overcome? Goodwin again returns to the categories of Law and Gospel. They were not humbled enough and were not convinced that they are great sinners.⁸⁸ But most

Puritans, especially those most keen on preparation, would have heartily approved of Goodwin's reference to humiliation as a major "means" of begetting true rather than temporary faith. Goodwin realizes this, and distances himself from an emphasis on preparation that does not move on immediately to the Gospel, by pointing out the problems with "humbled" seekers. First, it is frequently Law without pardon. Many, he says, mistake the Law for the Gospel, as though humiliation were part of the "good news." It is rather the bad news that comes before the good news. Too many try to find life or at least assurance of life in their humiliation under the Law. Christ's invitation, "Come unto me all ye that are weary," is not a command to become weary, as if being weary were a condition of saving faith that somehow one had to eagerly inculcate. Goodwin says, the sinner *is* weary, that *is* the unbeliever's condition. Therefore, "Ease lies not in being weary, but in coming to Christ."⁸⁹ It is not only very often Law without pardon, it is too often reform without justification and a confidence in despair rather than in faith.⁹⁰

Preparationism is actually a potential architect of temporary faith, Goodwin implies, because the seeker concludes that he cannot come until he reforms his life and kindles faith within himself.⁹¹ In fact, although he does express very sensual and emotive images in his writing, Goodwin does not seem to have the confidence in the processes of the human heart and conscience that one finds in some of the preparationists. Like natural reason, the conscience, and the will, "The heart is apt to be setting up ladders of its own making, and to say in itself, I will go pray, and seek Christ, and so get him, but thou must come to Christ as 'near thee,' to give thee power."⁹² In other words, why is there all of this emphasis on seeking Christ as if he were a stranger in a far away land? We must come to him directly, not by climbing. "No, none of his best and dearest

servant dare venture or stand at that bar in their own obedience or righteousness, either at or after conversion, and yet appear before God they must, and be justified by some such righteousness, or they will be condemned ”⁹³ So for Goodwin, falling from faith and grace is just that falling short of a confidence in Christ and his death, resurrection, and intercession. Temporary faith calls upon duties and preparations in the attempt to distinguish itself as genuine, but true faith does not look to itself, it casts all hope upon Christ, even though that hope does not necessarily bring him the assurance that he is in view. Therefore, in a somewhat ironic twist, Goodwin suggests that an over-emphasis on preparation might itself be sign of temporary faith.

Obedience and Perseverance

The covenant of works or nature made perfect obedience the condition of eternal pardon. “Do this and ye shall live.” However, when God promised Adam and Eve a Savior, the covenant of grace was announced. At the cross, what had been lost through Adam’s disobedience had now been recovered through the obedience of the Second Adam. The Puritans, Goodwin included, generally believed that Rome had replaced the covenant of grace with the covenant of works. And most also believed that Arminianism had accomplished the same end by turning faith into the ground rather than the instrument of justification. Instead of being justified by a perfect righteousness, the believer is justified by faith as the substitute for the perfect holiness God requires. In other words, faith is accepted as the fulfillment of the moral Law. The Puritans, on the other hand, following the reformers, insisted that when justification of the sinner is in view, faith is not only not a new Law or the fulfillment of the Law, but is utterly opposed to the Law.

Goodwin illustrates this unwillingness to allow a conditional note of obedience into the

Gospel, an unwillingness that was not as secure with every Puritan divine. Therefore, the Law offered no pardon, no freedom, and no assistance, like the conscience, it merely condemned in this matter of justification. By contrast, the Gospel offered no wrath, no bondage, and no fear of condemnation. Goodwin was willing to take this to the extent that the death of Christ is not only sufficient to save a great sinner upon his first conversion, but is capable of saving him from great sins afterward as well. In commenting on the Psalmist's reference to God's children forsaking his Law, Goodwin observes the following:

That God will pardon your sins of ordinary infirmities that you commit, that you think easily the covenant of grace doth reach and extend to, ay, but here is a proviso (you call them so in acts and wills) which is an ampliation of the covenant of grace upon the supposition of the worst of cases, of the worst of those who are under the covenant of grace 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments,' &c. You see the amplitude of the covenant of grace (what hath God to do to run out to this?) and you shall see the largeness of the covenant of grace, how far it extends. 94

We often come to the place where we wonder "what sins God pardons after regeneration" and that is why the "if" is so important, Goodwin says

He repeats it, and indigates it over and over, for, as Calvin says, it is the hardest thing in the world to believe it, and whoever lives in great sins, it is the hardest thing in the world to believe that God will pardon him. But doth he speak of the members of Christ, is it of those that are actual members of Christ that he speaks this? Is it not of their sins before conversion rather? Nay, but it is after 'If his sons forsake my law,' says the 30th verse. Those that are his sons and children are actually in the state of grace. At the day of judgment, says he, Heb 11 13, 'Lo I and the children which God hath given me,' and he is called an 'everlasting Father,' Isa 1x 6. Take the title of their sins, he calls them 'transgressions' and 'iniquities,' ver 32, 'pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin.' One of the words signify falseness, treachery of sin. Thus he sets out the greatness of those sins which it is supposed that saints may fall into, after they are children. I will not say that it is not to be said how far men may sin, as it cannot be said how far men may go and not be sincere, so neither how far a man may sin. Though it is certain there was a seed of God remained, yet that person that was excommunicated is called 'the wicked person.' Water may be so heated, that any body that puts his hand into it may say, Here is no cold in it, but yet, though it scalds, let it stand a while and all the heat will be gone. Let men in a state of grace be inflamed with lusts, that one would think there is nothing of grace, yet there is a principle of grace which

will reduce them at last Thus much for the greatness of sin ⁹⁵

But will there not be many who will take such words as an encouragement to license? Will they not conclude that, so long as they trust in Christ, they may even forsake God's Law with impunity? Not in the least, because those whom God justifies he sanctifies and the gift of faith and perseverance is an active, growing, obeying faith ⁹⁶ To say that obedience is not a part of justification or justifying faith is not to conclude that justifying faith is opposed to obedience Far from it it is only this faith that can truly produce the works God enjoys Therefore, Goodwin finds another passage, Exodus 34 7, in order to make the same point as above, and here he offers an interpretation that would surely have made those like Baxter, who was convinced that high Calvinists were antinomians, more firmly resolved in his conviction

1st, Says he, I will be kind for all this, I will not make my kindness void so it is in the Hebrew, ver 33 He had said four things of their sins 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments,' and there are four several expressions which relate to his pardoning them, 'Notwithstanding my loving-kindness will I not make void, nor suffer my faithfulness to lie my covenant will I not profane, nor alter the things gone out of my lips' So that here is four to four 2dly, Consider how he suits these expressions in correspondency to their sins 1st, 'If they keep not my commandments,' ver 31, 'My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,' ver 28 2dly, 'If they forsake my law,' ver 30, 'I will not alter the thing gone out of my lips,' ver 34 3dly, 'If they profane my statutes,' ver 31, 'I will not profane my covenant,' ver 34 It is a mighty speech, as if God had said, I should run into profaneness, and be as profane as you, if I should break covenant ⁹⁷

The only reason that the covenant of grace still holds fast is that Christ has taken his blood with him into the Holy of Holies "We owe our standing in grace every moment to his sitting in heaven and interceding every moment" ⁹⁸ Christ is the rainbow around God's throne promising never to destroy us ⁹⁹ "As by reason of intercession God remembers not old sins, so likewise he is not

provoked by new For though God, when he justifies us, should forgive all old sins past for ever, so as never to remember them more, yet new ones would break forth, and he could not but take notice of them, and so, so long as sin continues, there is need of a continuing intercession ”¹⁰⁰ So remarkably objective is Goodwin, and determined to make Christ the object of the direct act of faith, that he makes the activity of Christ in history the anchor of any individual’s genuine, saving faith, and the activity of Christ now in heaven the anchor of any individual’s genuine, saving perseverance “We are to look at these two as causes of a double effect, to look at his dying as that which is the ‘beginning of our faith,’ (so according to the Greek, and the margin of our translation), and at his sitting at God’s right hand as an intercessor, for the ‘finishing of our faith’ thereby, and so of our final salvation ”¹⁰¹ There is no hedging on the purely unconditional character of this covenant of grace for Goodwin, as he takes on objections

You may say, My infidelity and obstinacy may hinder it [salvation], though Christ doth what in him lies Ans Well, but intercession undertakes the work absolutely, for Christ prays not conditionally in heaven, ‘If men shall believe, &c,’ as we do here on earth, not for propositions only, but for persons, and therefore he prays to cure that very infidelity It was the fault that God found with the old priesthood, that it ‘made nothing perfect,’ Heb vii 19 Now in like manner Christ’s priesthood should be imperfect, if it made not the elect perfect, and then God must yet seek for another covenant, and a more perfect priest, for this would be found faulty, as the other was So then our comfort is, if Christ approve himself to be a perfect priest, we who come to God by him must be perfectly saved ¹⁰²

Because this covenant of grace is founded on another person’s perfect fulfillment of the covenant of works, and his obedience (active and passive) is imputed to believers under the covenant of grace, believers may even “sue” for pardon This is another place where we see the role of federal theology in high-lighting divine graciousness rather than placing the Law over grace ¹⁰³ The

phrase, “sue for righteousness” is taken by Goodwin to mean that the Mediator’s fulfillment of the covenant of works and the believer’s enjoyment of that righteousness in a covenant of grace allows the believer to actually “invoke” the terms of the covenant. True it is that God is not bound to all, but he has bound himself to the elect. Therefore, if the believer goes to the bench, pleading Christ’s righteousness, God is obligated by his own covenantal oath to save even the greatest sinner. It is not the merit of the believer that obligates God, but the merit of Christ, promised by God and claimed by the believer, that allows for such a bold approach.¹⁰⁴

In heaven, Christ pleads not only for mercy on the believer’s behalf, but for justice, since he has the righteousness of Christ imputed. It was mercy that brought this gift to the believer, and none of his justifying righteousness before God is inherent, nevertheless, because it is credited to the believer, God himself can find no fault and there is no basis for condemnation.¹⁰⁵ So, Christ’s blood speaks better than Abel’s, since the latter’s cries out from the ground, but the former’s from heaven.¹⁰⁶ “In that he rose again as a common person, this assures us yet further that there is a formal, legal, and irrevocable act of justification of us passed and enrolled in that court of heaven between Christ and God, and that in his being then justified, we were also justified in him, so that thereby our justification is made past recalling.”¹⁰⁷ With the picture of the believer seated with Christ in heaven, Goodwin challenges, “fear condemnation if you can.”¹⁰⁸ Such daring statements may have troubled some of the brethren who had become more interested in the conditional aspect of the covenant, but they were wholly in keeping with the spirit and intent of the Puritan hope Perkins describes, in first person, the reasoning of the Christian after he or she is converted:

And as soon as I had played out all my lusts, or else been warned in the means season, I came

again to my old profession. Notwithstanding, many temptations went over my heart and the law as a right hangman tortured my conscience and went nigh to persuade me that my father would thrust me away and hang me if he caught me, so that I was like a great while to run away, rather than to return to my father again. Fear and dread of rebuke wrestled with the trust which I had in my father's goodness and, as it were, gave my faith a fall¹⁰⁹

In fact, an interesting exchange took place at the York House Conference, February 11, 1626, when Bishop Morton (Lichfield) and John Preston were positioned against Bishop Buckeridge and Francis White (dean of Carlisle). With the Duke of Buckingham presiding, Preston declared, "As a father cannot make an ill son to be none of his child, no more can God."¹¹⁰ At this, Preston was asked point-blank whether he believed that someone who was living in serious sin, though he had been justified, was therefore "in the state of eternal guiltiness until he did forsake his sin," and the Puritan divine replied, "No."¹¹¹ To say that sin cannot dissolve the bond of the covenant is not to suggest for one moment that the believer is free to sin. But even here, Goodwin refuses to bring the believer back under the terror of the Law. Why is the Spirit uniquely said to "grieve" at the believer's sin?

A father (as God the Father) is offended, but a familiar friend is grieved. He hath been burdened, and felt the weight of the old world (Gn vi), 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man therein.' And yet he relieves himself by bringing the flood upon them after an hundred and twenty years. But against these he thus indwells, whom he regenerates, he hath no relief, for he hath eternally undertaken for them.¹¹²

The pastoral force of this is remarkable. The Holy Spirit relieved himself of the grief by bringing a flood upon the sinful race, but he has obligated himself, within the covenant, to actually indwell those very people who continue to grieve him. Now, instead of destroying, he has committed himself to renewing and there is no turning back this eternally-determined activity.

The Spirit, too, cries, "Maranatha," to end the conflict and contradiction within the justified sinner, which he endures patiently in spite of the grief and offense the believer causes ¹¹³

This is how Goodwin, therefore, even addresses the work of the Spirit. He, too, is unconditionally committed to this project. It is not only the Son who is all-merciful and who intercedes for the believer despite his or her many and great sins, it is the Holy Spirit as well who is merciful. Goodwin is convinced that threats cannot bring about the renewal of the individual. The fear of punishment and hope of reward have no place in motivating obedience, since "both the law, the preaching of it, and the works of it, are in express words excluded and shut out from having any influence to convey the Spirit to us, that we may never so much as think to obtain the Spirit thereby" ¹¹⁴. Only the Gospel saves and renews. This, then, is just as true for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as for justification. The entire Christian life, including persevering faith and obedience, is a gift and is driven along by the unconditional promises of the Gospel. The Law must direct one's course, but only the Gospel can provide the new obedience ¹¹⁵. Says Goodwin,

The gift of the Spirit, to a truly converted soul, is an absolute gift, and not upon any conditions on our parts, but to work and maintain in us what God requires of us. The gift of the Spirit is not founded upon qualifications in us, to continue so long as we preserve grace in our souls, and do not sin it away ¹¹⁶

One is struck by the Augustinian emphasis on the freedom of the Christian, a freedom which creates rather than inhibits the believer's sanctification. Goodwin himself informs his readers,

Hath faith and the new creature these senses joined to and implanted in them? Then may a Christian, if it be not his fault, lead the most sensual life (pardon the expression) of any creature. For as God hath made the world for sense, so God hath prepared Christ, and all things spiritual to the new creature. You see what pleasures are in the visible world, which the senses let in, but the soul is able to drink in more at one draught in a moment than all the senses can let in, or the world afford us in ages. Now, what the world is to the body, that God and Christ are to the soul ¹¹⁷

But there is clearly a progressive character to sanctification and Goodwin does not fall into the antinomian view ¹¹⁸ Without a personal holiness, no one shall see God, but this is not a threat (i.e., a legal imperative), but a promise or even a statement of fact (i.e., an evangelical indicative) God sees to it, unconditionally, that he shall give to every believer perfect standing in justification, and a new heart ¹¹⁹ The believer who is justified will persevere not only in faith, but in works This is how Goodwin interprets a passage often used by the antinomians

How we may be said to be kept blameless until the day of Christ? To this an antinomian would be ready to give an easy answer with respect to their principles that all this is accomplished in justification, because Christ shall present us then to himself and his Father, clothed with his righteousness, we shall be spotless and without wrinkle But the blamelessness of the saints here, and in other the like places of that day, is not that of justification, but of sanctification ¹ For here he speaks of sincerity, 'being filled with the fruits of righteousness' ² And elsewhere, 1 Thes v 23, 'The God of peace sanctify you wholly, that your whole soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of Christ' It is spoken of sanctification, you see, and as so taken, I find it sometimes uttered (1) as an absolute promise which God undertakes to perform, as well as that the saints shall persevere, (2) sometimes as a prayer for, and exhortation to, us to be found as such, so here Of necessity, therefore, such a blamelessness, of that latitude and size, must be understood in these places, as is a common privilege to all saints that ever were, or shall be, and common even to those that have run into offences, as many of those he wrote to also did To be kept then to the practice of these and such like, is radically and essentially necessary to the being kept in the state of grace Again, if a man falls into particular acts of sin through temptation, wherein a Christian offendeth his own conscience or others, an essential law to the being kept in the state of grace is to return and convert, humbling themselves, renewing their repentance, as Peter did whose faith was recovered ¹²⁰

Key to this statement is Goodwin's remark, "Of necessity, therefore, such a blamelessness, of that latitude and size, must be understood in these places, as is a common privilege to all saints that ever were, or shall be, and common even to those that have run into offences, as many of those he wrote to also did" ¹²¹ It is not a sanctification that some of the justified have not attained, but a definitive status as "saints" and a principle or *habitus* that can never be destroyed It is a

vine planted by the Father, no matter the size or quality of the crop from season to season. Such “blamelessness” is equivalent to being in a state of grace. After all, Goodwin reminds us, justification is “only by faith, not repentance.”¹²²

In the matter of obedience and perseverance, and securing assurance from such faith, there is a tendency to devise standard rules or expectations about growth and sanctification. But Goodwin realizes that, unlike the “first conversion” (what Westminster finally settled on calling “regeneration” or the “effectual call”), the Christian life itself is synergistic. That is, sanctification depends at least in part on human cooperation. That would be reason enough to allow for variety, weakness, inconstancy, and differing degrees of faithfulness.

Now it is impossible to give certain rules what time is to be allotted for each of these, the conditions, tempers, constitutions of men do so vary. Poor men, that live by their daily labour, are necessitated to spend more time in their calling, than in recreations and duties. Men that are of weak and fiery spirits, and have callings that are exhausters of them, are as much necessitated to spend more time in recreations, than in their callings or holy duties, though perhaps if such men had grace enough, even the most serious duties might be a recreation to them. Rich men that are strong and vigorous, and want employments, that they may and ought to spend the more time in holy duties, their strength and leisure will afford it. But if a man proportions wisely and conscientiously forth his time, according to his conditions, between all these, and puts holy ends upon all, he will be found for the circumstance he stood in, and the ground he was planted in, filled with fruits of righteousness.¹²³

Why are such called the “fruits of righteousness”? “So that to believe upon Jesus Christ for righteousness, and to be effectually convinced that all our own works will stand us in no stead, and to go to Christ for his righteousness, is the greatest spring of good works, and the best stock to maintain them.”¹²⁴ Also,

because they flow from our union with the person of the Lord Jesus. They are fruits of righteousness by Jesus Christ, when the example of Christ is before me to move me to the like righteousness. Then my actions are the fruits of righteousness, whenas I look for all my

acceptation of all my fruits of righteousness in Jesus Christ, or when I expect that they should all be accepted of God in and through Jesus Christ, and not as they come from me. Thus our services are expressed (1 Pet 11 5) to be 'sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,' as they are found in him, and as God relisheth Christ in them 124

Therefore, Goodwin follows Calvin's harmonization of James and Paul. There is an authoritative justification (i.e., before God), which is by faith alone, and a demonstrative justification *by* God *before* men, by faith and works 125. This is similar to Christ's being declared to be the Son of God with power (Ac 13 32, 33)

Now Jesus Christ was not made any whit more God's Son by his resurrection than he was before, how is it then said by his resurrection to be fulfilled? And as the resurrection of the Son of God added nothing to his Sonship that was essential thereunto, so neither did this justification of Abraham by works, James 11 21, add anything to God's real imputing of Christ's righteousness, but was the signal of it. So then, let us conceive aright of God's proceedings herein. Says God of a man that now but begins to put forth a naked act of faith, I do here justify this man, and I do justify him for ever, and I will never recall it.

But a carnal heart might object, Will God beforehand thus rashly give forth an eternal justification of man? Will he not stay until he sees works to spring from it? No, says God, I will adventure to do it now, for when I mean to justify according to my decree of election, I give him faith, the faith of my elect, and I see (for he sees all our thoughts and wants afar off) this faith I justify this man now upon, this sole act of believing for justification, to be so genuine, so true and unfeigned faith, and of the true and right breed, that I will adventure it, or rather undertake for it, that in the future course of this man's life it shall bring forth in his heart and life acts and dispositions suitable, which shall justify this my justifying of this man, which when it shall do, then is God's sentence of justifying him said to be fulfilled 126

The Friendship of God

Persistent in his appeal to the Gospel as the motivating force for persevering faith and obedience, Goodwin concentrates on God as friend. In fact, this is not only the subject of an essay, it appears regularly in his sermons and doctrinal works. This reference to God as a friend is meant to inspire greater dependence and, therefore, a deeper faith. "Consider, first, that God hath been your ancient friend, even from everlasting. He is such a friend as never had his thoughts off from

us There is not a moment in which he hath not loved us, and had his thoughts upon us "127

Goodwin brings God's goodness, lavishly prepared, before the believer's view in extravagant, almost indulgent, language and metaphor 128 Even close friends may desert a believer in a time of scandal, but that is just when "God will break in and own thee "129 In fact, God has made his glory and the believer's good entirely coincidental

All his attributes shall be for thy happiness as well as for his own glory, and though all these attributes serve for his own glory, yet they shall as truly and really serve for thy comfort as for his glory All within him and without him shall be set on work for thy good What canst thou have more of a friend? Now if God hath been, is, and will be such a friend to us, what manner of persons should we be in returns again unto him! 130

The believer is called to share the intertrinitarian fellowship 131 And this is why the believer should fear sin--not out of selfishness, a fear of punishment Goodwin argues that the fear of grieving a friend who cannot take revenge is much greater and deeper in a relationship than the fear of revenge itself 132 Romans 7 characterizes the life of every Christian person, Goodwin maintains The good that the believer wants to do he or she often falls short of completing The commandment is recognized as good and proper and right, but failure abounds Yet, Goodwin affirms,

Thou art then a good servant, and though thou failest sometimes in a particular action, yet still thy heart in thy course is firmly set for the commandment, and makes account so to be wheresoever thou goest Thou knowest what thou meanest to do, and all the world shall not bear thee from it I confess a child of God may have a great deal ado in his own heart to deny himself in some cases, yet still his heart cleaves to the commandment, and still thinks that to be more necessary, whereas a wicked man's heart slights the commandment in such a case, and thinks much it should stand in his way, and he leaps over the biggest of all, if need be, for his master lust commands 133

The believer is justified by grace and renewed by grace in order to serve his or her original purpose in creation “It is the great design of the gospel to promote the life, and power, and practice of godliness”¹³⁴ It is not grace and works that are at odds, but grace and merit The believer’s works are only opposed to the Gospel in the question of justification In other words, God has yet to reconcile a rebel objectively who is nevertheless an enemy in secret

For what honesty or equity is there that thou shouldst seek the pardon of thy sin, and yet live in it, or not part with it in they full resolutions? Would a king pardon a traitor, though he sued never so humbly, if he saw he would be a traitor still? Therefore, resolve either to leave every known sin, and submit to every known duty, or else never look to find favour and mercy from God¹³⁵

Nevertheless, one of the greatest temptations in the middle aged Christian is “in the point of justification,” as people trust their own spiritual as well as material progress”¹³⁶

Conclusion

The reality of professing believers falling away demands some sort of biblical and pastoral response, and Goodwin is convinced that the doctrine of the temporary believer, as taught by Calvin and his successors, is sufficient to explain that reality This should not dissuade the believer from trusting in Christ, since it is the direct act of faith the justifies, not the evidence or confidence that one’s faith is genuine Included in the covenantal promise, upon no conditions, is not only that the believer would believe, but that he or she would persevere in the faith and that such faith would perpetually bear fruit Nevertheless, such fruit may not be in abundance in particular stages of a believer’s life and therefore Christ, as nakedly considered, is the object of both justifying and assuring faith The believer can trust the Law to produce his persevering faith

and obedience as surely as he could trust it for his justification. The Gospel must do all, including sanctification and perseverance to the end.

Finally, a believer is to be comforted in this struggle toward godliness by the conviction that God is a friend, and no longer a judge. Assurance arises when the believer begins to realize that God has more love for him or her than the believer has sins and doubts. "And when the believer shall see this world declining to the extremist age, at last all in flames, he will not only be in safety, but will stand erect and joyful upon the ashes and ruins of the world, and not having the least part of his happiness lessened by this universal desolation, he will cry with a great and cheerful voice, 'I have lost nothing'"¹³⁷

Notes to Chapter Ten

1 Augustine, *De Dono Perseverantiae* (A.D. 428), in *Saint Augustine's Anti-Pelagian Works*, trans by Peter Holmes and Robert Wallis, revised by B. B. Warfield, from *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff, volume 5 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark), p. 521 ff. Cf. Heiko Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, *op. cit.*, p. 175 ff., for evidence of the influence of the *via Augustini moderna* on the eve of the Protestant Reformation.

2 *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 17, "Of the Perseverance of the Saints." "I. They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. II. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof. III. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and, for a time, continue therein whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves."

3 Hebrews 4:1-2

4 *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, *ibid.*

5 The Canons of the Synod of Dort, *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions*, *op. cit.*, 5th Main Point of Doctrine, Art. 8.

With respect to themselves this not only easily could happen, but also undoubtedly would happen, but with respect to God it cannot possibly happen, since his plan cannot be changed, his promise cannot fail, the calling

according to his purpose cannot be revoked, the merit of Christ as well as his interceding and preserving cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be invalidated nor wiped out

Art 14

And, just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and completes his work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments

6 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 11, Section 2, Chapter 16, Section 2

7 The Canons of the Synod of Dort, *op cit*, Fifth Point, Rejection 7

Who teach that the faith of those who believe only temporarily does not differ from justifying and saving faith except in duration alone For Christ himself in Matthew 13 20ff and Luke 8 13ff clearly defines these further differences between temporary and true believers he says that the former receive the seed on rocky ground, and the latter receive it in good ground, or a good heart, the former have no root, and the latter are firmly rooted, the former have no fruit, and the latter produce fruit in varying measure, with steadfastness, or perseverance

9 Goodwin, 11 81

10 *ibid*

11 6 23

12 *ibid*

13 6 56-58

14 *ibid*

15 6 57

16 6 58

17 6 154

18 6 328

19 6 135

20 *ibid*

21 6 58

22 *ibid*

23 *ibid*

24 6 136

25 6 142

26 6 240

27 6 232

28 6 233

29 6 238 ff

30 6 238-9

31 6 241

32 *ibid*

33 6 232-2

34 *ibid*

35 *ibid*

36 *ibid*

37 *ibid*

38 6 322-3

39 6 346, cf p 348

40 6 348

41 6 349

42 6 359

43 6 363

- 44 6 359
45 6 385
46 6 359
47 6 361
48 6 330
49 6 331
50 6 268-271
51 R T Kendall, *op cit*, p 143
52 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 11
53 Goodwin, 6 339
54 6 345
55 *ibid*
56 6 332
57 *ibid*
58 *ibid*
59 6 333-5
60 *ibid*
61 *ibid*
62 *ibid*
63 John Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 2 11
64 *ibid*
65 *ibid*
66 *ibid*
67 *ibid*
68 *ibid*
69 Calvin even concedes, “Yet the reprobate are justly said to believe that God is merciful toward them, for they receive the gift of reconciliation, although confusedly and not distinctly enough. And I do not deny that God illumines their minds enough for them to recognize his grace, but he so distinguishes that awareness from the exclusive testimony he gives to his elect that they do not attain the full effect and fruition thereof” (*ibid*). How then can one know that his or her own faith is genuine? Calvin’s comments here do provoke that pastoral question and if assurance is faith, the believer struggling with this question seems to have nowhere to go. After all, is not the reprobate here looking to Christ as the mirror of his election? The reprobate even “believe that God is merciful toward them,” which is Calvin’s definition of justifying faith, and “they receive the gift of reconciliation.” If this is granted, the Puritans can legitimately wonder how assurance can be of the essence of saving faith.
70 Goodwin, 6 324-359
71 6 336
72 6 337
73 *ibid*
74 6 340
75 6 344
76 6 478
77 *ibid*
78 6 509 ff
79 6 88
80 6 89
81 6 88-89

- 82 *ibid*
83 6 90-91
84 *ibid*
85 *ibid*
86 *ibid*
87 8 19
88 8 333
90 8 335
91 8 334
92 8 335
93 *ibid* Cf p 278
94 8 71-72
95 *ibid*
96 *ibid*
97 8 72
98 8 64
99 8 65
100 8 66
101 8 67
102 8 69
103 Cf Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh The Handsel Press, 1985), pp 30-32, 56-57, 131-150, for an elaboration of the discontinuity thesis on this point Also, see J B Torrance, "The Concept of Federal Theology--Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?", in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, Wilhelm H Neuser, ed (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1994), pp 15-36
104 Goodwin, 6 146
105 6 76
106 6 77
107 6 87
108 6 88
109 William Perkins, Breward edition of *Works, op cit*, p 373
110 Cited in Dewey Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination, op cit*, p 88
111 *ibid*
112 Goodwin, 6 89-100
113 *ibid*
114 *ibid*
115 *ibid*
116 *ibid*
117 *ibid*
118 *ibid*
119 *ibid*
120 *ibid*
121 *ibid*
123 *ibid*
124 *ibid*
122 *ibid*
123 *ibid*
124 *ibid*
125 *ibid*
126 *ibid*

127 8 194 ff, For instance, Goodwin writes, vol 8, pp 194 ff

Consider what his love hath caused him to do for thee He first gave thee a paradise, but that was not good enough He prepares heaven, not as that which thou wert worthy of from thine original, but which he thought meet to bestow, to shew how great a God he is Heb 11 11, 'He was not ashamed to be called their God, for he prepared for them a city' Yea, he was not contented with the ordinary direct means of loving, but, as those that are vast and lavish in entertainments, hemust have uncouth artificial ways to love such as are extraordinary To love us only the plain and direct and downright way, and to give us heaven the first day, as he did the angels that never sinned, this was too low, too mean His love must have meanders, windings, difficulties, yea, much water to encounter it, and so endanger the quenching of it, all this to commend the greatness and transcendency of it 'Love is as strong as death,' and 'much water cannot quench it,' Cant viii 6 And Rom v 8, 'In this God commends his love, that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' So says St Paul

But to do it not for friends, but enemies, and to this end, to make them friends, when he could have created new ones cheaper, and enough of them, yet to die for ungodly sinners, enemies But for a Father to give and offer up his Son, is a love above our thoughts to conceive, or our words to express 'My God, my God' (says Christ, Mat xxvii 46), why hast thou forsaken me?' thou who art in so special a respect my God and my Father (see Eph 1 3) And he speaks thus, knowing it would strike and affect his soul And yet he speaks but the half of what God did in it, and yet in that consider how he parted with, yea, forsook an old friend, a bosom friend, and how Christ also forsook father and mother for his wife, the church, Eph v 25 And do you think God to be so insensible or impassible, or without natural affection to such a Son, as that all those speeches should be but rhetorical figures, and feignings of a sorrowful part? He laid the wood of the sacrifice, viz, our sins, about his soul, for 'he laid upon him the iniquities of us all,' and he blew the fire too Think but with yourselves if his mother Mary must have been the crucifier of him, and must have knocked in every nail with her feeble trembling hands (whilst at every stroke a sword is said to have 'pierced through her soul'), what excess of sorrow would have oppressed her! But now, even what man did against him is said to be by God the Father's own hand and counsel It was an extravagancy, a superabundancy of love, love's device, an invention of love, that knew not how to shew love enough And, my brethren, these are not notions or ideas, these are the greatest realities and existences, which are only to be understood with our hearts, and not by our understandings, for 'the love of God' and Christ 'passeth understanding,' Eph iii 19, and so is not taken in, but by the immediate impress of the Holy Ghost

128 ibid

129 ibid

130 ibid

131 ibid

132 ibid

133 ibid

134 ibid

135 ibid

136 ibid

137 ibid

Chapter Eleven

The Gathered Church and the Means of Grace

An examination of Goodwin's theology, particularly as it relates to the debate over faith and assurance, would not be complete without a discussion of the Independent divine's ecclesiology and view of the sacraments. In pastoral terms, one's ecclesiology may have more to do with how one experiences assurance of faith than even some of the important soteriological *loci* more directly related to that question. The more Erastian ecclesiology that had been familiar in England as on the continent was inclined to view the church as a company of elect and reprobate. The church, in other words, was the nation at worship.¹ Even in the Genevan polity adopted at Westminster, "The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error."² As we shall see below, the Independent ecclesiology so stressed the "gathered church" that the anxiety over personal assurance was heightened. When it comes to the nature of the church, whether it is a mixed company of elect and reprobate, invisible and visible, and the methods employed in determining the suitability of a church member, it is here where a weak conscience might well find either support or anxiety.

Furthermore, the role of the sacraments in assurance is of great importance. As we have seen, the reformers themselves admitted the practical syllogism, at least in principle, although it was not emphasized or given much place in pastoral practice. At the end of the day, Calvin sent struggling believers back to the sacraments—to baptism as the "sign and seal" of their adoption, and to the Lord's table as the confirmation of perpetual forgiveness.³ The reason for this

emphasis was that it drew the believer who had been caught up in self-doubt out of himself to something objective. God had done something. He had promised, acted, and given, apart from and prior to a human response. The question is whether the Puritans in general, and Goodwin in particular, followed this pastoral advice, or whether they placed external evidences in its place.⁴

Part One The Church

The Rightly Defined Church

John Milton expressed the sentiment of his fellow Independents in his famous remark, “New presbyter is but old priest writ large.”⁵ Like the conformists before and after them, the Presbyterians wanted to maintain a national church (synods and councils), with regional church bodies (presbyteries) as well as local congregations.⁶ And when they came to power in 1640 they insisted upon a national discipline and a binding confession and catechisms, and because they were willing to admit everyone into the assembly, the Presbyterians would never truly “purify” the churches. Led politically by Oliver Cromwell and theologically by Thomas Goodwin and John Owen, the Independents sought a greater purity, which they believed depended upon a view of the church as exclusively local and a view of membership that was exclusively “pure.”⁷ To many Presbyterians, this smelled of Anabaptist fanaticism and this point has not been lost on modern historians.⁸ As Roland Bainton remarks, “There was one respect in which they diverged from the Calvinist pattern and took their stand with the Anabaptists, namely in that they discovered the final mark of the saint in an inner experience.”⁹ Calvin had written,

By baptism we are initiated into faith in [Christ], by partaking in the Lord's Supper we attest our unity in true doctrine and love, in the Word of the Lord we have agreement, and for the preaching of the Word the ministry instituted by Christ is preserved. In this church are mingled many hypocrites who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance.¹⁰

The Westminster Assembly, called by Parliament in 1643, was presbyterian with the exception of the "Five Dissenting Brethren," of whom Goodwin was chief spokesman. In fact, the *Minutes of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* records the remarkable dominance of Goodwin in the ecclesiological debate that was very much at the heart of controversies amongst the divines themselves.¹¹ As Frederick L. Fagley observes, these Independent churches, especially those across the Atlantic, "rejected all compulsion by Bishop of Presbytery, for the only compulsion the churches of New England would recognize was that of the Spirit of Christ."¹² It was just such sentiments that provoked the Presbyterian suspicion of "enthusiasm" and they chastened their English Independent brethren at the Assembly with the example of New England.¹³ When Cromwell and the Independents gained the upper hand by 1645, the Confession, though officially adopted by Parliament, never exercised its dominion in England.

First, Goodwin was an ardent defender of the Independent notion that there is only one expression of the visible church—the local body. In fact, Goodwin was the leading voice for Independency at the Westminster Assembly, his name appearing throughout the record of daily proceedings at the Assembly from February 2 through May 14, 1664, and the issue was hotly debated again in the fall of that same year. He contends as follows:

· There is a church universal (mystical, which can be either considered as all visible or only invisible saints), and a local church. National bodies or general assemblies or 'presbyteries' cannot be called 'churches'. And further, we assert this notion or name of mystical church, to be given not only to the invisible company of the elect, and real members of Christ the Head, but to the visible company of professors of Christianity that do walk as saints, and are esteemed as such

by saints throughout the world ¹⁴

Therefore, Goodwin did affirm that there was a universal church, but this is the “mystical church” ¹⁵ When, however, one is referring to the church that may be seen anywhere in the world, it is always the local congregations he has in mind There can be, in other words, no Church of England or, for that matter, a regional church “The church” means “this church over here” or “that church over there,” Goodwin argues, distinct, individual, independent congregations ¹⁶ Furthermore, “A church in general is an assembly of saints, of believers, of men called It is a company or assembly united” ¹⁷ The Presbyterians, following the Augustinian and Reformed traditions generally, regarded the church as assemblies of saints *and* unbelievers, a mixed company of elect and reprobate, and the covenant of grace was larger than the decree of election, comprehending some who would not persevere This difference had enormous implications in pastoral practice, and we shall refer to it below

The “Rightly Ordered” Church

The magisterial Reformation identified two marks of a true church, apart from which there could be no true church The Word correctly preached and the sacraments correctly administered ¹⁷ Unlike Bucer, Calvin himself did not regard discipline as a mark of a true church, but defended it as essential to a “rightly ordered” church, stating, “We do not by our vote approve such persons as members of the church, but we leave them such place as they occupy among the people of God until it is lawfully taken from them” ¹⁸ “It has already been explained how much we ought to value the ministry of the Word and sacraments, and how far our reverence for it should go, that it may be to us a perpetual token by which to distinguish the church That is,

wherever the ministry remains whole and uncorrupted, no moral faults or diseases prevent it from bearing the name 'church' ”¹⁹ In fact, the reformer goes so far as to say, “I see no reason why a Church, however universally corrupted, provided it contain a few godly members, should not be denominated, in honour of this remnant, the holy people of God ”²⁰ In Augustinian fashion, Calvin observes, “The Church was always like a barn (Matt 3 12) in which the chaff is mingled with the wheat, or rather, the wheat is overpowered by the chaff ”²¹ Further, “The purest Churches have their blemishes, and some are marked, not by a few spots, but by general deformity,”²² , but this does not necessarily deny the marks of a true church

Calvin, however, has such a high regard for discipline--forged, no doubt, in the debates with the *Petit Conseil*, that his successors were more inclined to view it as the third mark of a true church Beza, for instance, includes in his Catechism's discussion of the marks, “And, consequently, we join to the Word the Sacraments and the administration of ecclesiastical discipline, such as God has ordained ”²³ Beza reminds Genevans, however, not to “judge rashly” in this manner “For we must await the judgment of God who will expose hypocrites and false brethren ”²⁴ The Scots Confession (chapter 18) and the Belgic Confession (article 29) list discipline as the third mark ²⁵ The Westminster divines end up concluding that this third mark is essential to the well-being, but not to the being, of a true church ²⁶ This would fit with Calvin's notion of the “rightly ordered” church, in which discipline is exercised It meant that the offices that Calvin and the Reformed believed to have been established by Christ must be recovered from their “Babylonian captivity” to a combination of secular rulers who acted like ecclesiastical authorities and ecclesiastical authorities who acted like secular rulers In order to organize a church in which the Word is rightly

preached and the sacraments are rightly administered, that church must be rightly ordered

Calvin himself left a great deal of room for differences within the Reformed community over polity and even the degree of liturgical conformity, as he and Bullinger appear to have sided with the Elizabethan bishops in disputes over vestments²⁷ While every vestige of “idolatry” that might lead the people astray must eventually be uprooted, Calvin believed that there was an order of priority in the business of reformation and that a church that fell short of the strict appellation, “rightly ordered,” could still be considered a true church in need of further reformation²⁸ The Puritans accepted this, remaining within the Church of England, and many conformed to the Settlement’s liturgical demands²⁹ But when it appeared that all hopes of “further reformation” were beyond reach, the movement became increasingly anxious to not only bring down conformity, but the entire episcopal system and structure that was occupied with enemies of nonconformist Puritans Thomas Cartwright represented this “new discipline” and popularized Beza’s ecclesiology for an entire generation of Settlement-weary Puritans³⁰

Membership

As noted above, Goodwin and the Independents viewed the church as an assembly of believers who could offer a credible profession and at least rudimentary evidences of conversion Whereas the Reformed tradition, clinging to its Augustinian sympathies, insisted that the church is always a mixed company and the wheat and weeds are only separated at the end of the age, the Congregational Puritans tended to view purity of membership as the aim here and now³¹ Goodwin argues,

For whereas Christ would have saints, by virtue of their Christianity, to love all those whom

they judge to be saints in a different respect from the world, our presbyterian brethren, even in religious matters, extend their charity and rule in things of worship to the generality of men in a nation. There must be a national church, made up of all who are plainly the world. They will take in men merely moral and civil in their outward deportment, and make such rules and constitutions of church fellowship as shall take in these and suit with them. And by this rule multitudes of poor saints in a nation are excluded, who cannot join in such a loose constitution of a church.³²

So, by including the entire nation, the Presbyterians would end up excluding the Independents, who could not, in good conscience, serve in such a “mixed company.” We must beware, however, of assuming that the distinguishing mark for determining true and legitimate membership had to do chiefly with morality. Neither group would have accepted scandalous members, still less, scandalous elders and ministers. Nevertheless, Goodwin and his brethren objected to their willingness to “take in men merely moral and civil in their outward deportment.”³³ It was not more morality the Independents like Goodwin were wanting, but a profession of faith. Goodwin warned his readers to

take heed no wolf, no hypocrite, no carnal person may come in, till they be able to give an account of their faith, to the edification of God’s church. For this we shall read, that those are only members fitted for the church which are able to manifest their faith.³⁴

So much for the Augustinian maxim in describing the church, “There are many sheep without and many wolves within.”³⁵

It is very important to recognize what Goodwin is *not* saying. He is not arguing that potential members must be drilled in academic questions, nor that they be required to demonstrate a moving crisis experience through a detailed spiritual autobiography. Their conversion experience is not in view for Goodwin, but he does want to know in what their current profession of faith consists. Can they offer a credible profession of faith and can they agree with the Confession of

Faith in its essential points? This is necessary, Goodwin insists, for membership in the true church-
-which is to say, the local, independent congregation³⁶ The Arminian and Independent Puritan,
John Goodwin, replied to this view in a letter addressed to Thomas Goodwin on October 25,
1639

The necessity of your covenant, prolix Confession of Faith, putting men to deliver their judgments in points of doubtful disputation upon and before their admission to your churches, the power of the keys and of ordination of ministers to be the right and inheritance of the whole body of the congregation, and of every member promiscuously and indifferently, the divine institution or peremptory necessity of your ruling elders, the necessity of widows as of officers in the church, the absolute necessity of one and the same government or discipline in all particulars whatsoever, in all churches, in all times and places, a full and peremptory determination of all things whatsoever appertaining to the worship of God, with divers like positions (which are the very life, soul, and substance of your way), I am at perfect peace in my thoughts that you will never be able to demonstrate or prove from the Scriptures to any sober-minded and considering man³⁷

It is not surprising, of course, that an Arminian would find a Calvinist confession of faith extraordinarily demanding in matters of “doubtful disputation,” but John Goodwin even goes further than this, and argues that not only must there be no hierarchy in the government of a so-called national and regional church, there is no reason why the average layperson should not be given the right to rule equally³⁸ Why have “ruling elders” at all? We can see how the excessive rigors of conformity had created an atmosphere of reaction and just as an Episcopal Puritan might have blamed Congregationalism on the Presbyterians, the Presbyterians often painted Congregationalists with the brush of “Quakerism”³⁹ Nevertheless, in spite of John Goodwin’s more radical individualism, he does sound almost like a Laudian when he takes issue with Thomas Goodwin’s requirement that all members adopt the “covenant” of the congregation, which includes the written confession of faith, the offering of a sincere and credible profession of personal faith, and a determination to live a godly life

We doubt by what warrant of Scripture, or otherwise, any church of Christ can impose any such express and formal covenant upon all those that desire membership with them, as a peremptory condition of their admittance, as is now generally practised in all your churches. We conceive the Scripture will nowhere justify these proceedings, but rather judge there is much evil, and a manifold inconvenience, in the urging and exacting such a covenant. So that we conceive any such exaction to be a mere human invention, and a strain of that wisdom that desires to exalt itself not only above all that is practised by men, but above that which is written by God himself. Therefore, to make any thing necessary which the law of God maketh not necessary, is not to keep the law, but (as James saith) to judge it.

Philip required no other covenant or condition of the eunuch to qualify him for baptism, and thereby to give him entrance into the church, but only to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart, and to profess it to him, Acts viii 37. To me there is no imaginable use or necessity of this your covenant, because believers, willing or agreeing to live together in the same body, are bound by greater bands a thousandfold than any covenant they can make between themselves, to perform mutually all manner of Christian love, service, and duties whatsoever. Christ himself is the greatest of all bands, and all manner of obligements and engagements whatsoever, both to knit and hold Christians together, to make them of one heart and of one soul, and to keep them so.⁴⁰

John Goodwin's harsh remarks do not seem to be motivated by his Arminian sentiments, as Presbyterian and Episcopalian Calvinists found such Congregational "covenants" unnecessary and excessive, and, unlike John Goodwin, they could not help but oppose anything that savored of Brownist Separatism.⁴¹ Thomas Goodwin did not believe that the baptized children of believers actually began to enjoy church fellowship until they eventually, upon reaching adulthood, embraced the congregation's covenant for themselves.⁴² John Goodwin's response would have found a good deal of support among many Puritans.

Doubtless God requires it not at our hands to be either more provident or jealous for his glory than he is himself. And lastly, this covenant is neither lawful before baptism, nor necessary after. Baptism doth immediately qualify for church fellowship.⁴³

In fact, "by admitting any to her baptism," the church "ipso facto admits into her fellowship."⁴⁴

Ironically, it is John Goodwin on this point who seems closer to Calvin's view when the former

writes, "The mighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ teach us how to make something of

nothing, and by the use of a miserable, distracted, and broken world, to compass and fetch in the day of eternity”⁴⁵ Nevertheless, John Goodwin’s egalitarian polity eventually led to schisms and disputes that greatly disrupted the church’s ministry⁴⁶

One can discern a significant shift in ecclesiology between the later Puritans and the Independents. In fact, this shift, though often ignored in debates over continuity, has rather large implications for the doctrine of assurance.⁴⁷ The Reformed conformists (Puritan or not) shared the same theology with the nonconformists on every point except for ecclesiology, and this is significant. It is not only a matter of polity--how the church is governed and administered, but the definition of the true church, regulation of the true church, membership and discipline within a true church. The conformists tended to be closest to the Continental Reformed view of the distinction between visible and invisible, admitting men and women who had not been tested for membership. After all, Calvin’s repristinization of Augustine’s view of the church as a mixed company shows up clearly in Alexander Nowell’s 1563 Catechism.⁴⁸ The church is not perfect on earth, Nowell states

For so long as we live a mortal life in this world, such is the feebleness and frailty of mankind we are too weak strength wholly to shun all kinds of vices. Therefore the holiness of the church is not yet full and perfectly finished, but yet very well begun.⁴⁹

Notice the corporate view of sanctification, in contrast to the individualism that one sees developing especially within this later, Independent Puritanism. Indeed, the individualism attributed by Jinkins to federalism is rather more appropriately credited to the drift toward independent polity.⁵⁰ Nowell had emphasized the importance of “visible” and “invisible” the invisible church consists of “those whom God by his secret election hath adopted to himself

through Christ which church can neither be seen with eyes, nor can continually be known by signs
Yet there is a visible church, or that may be seen, the tokens or marks whereof he doth shew or open
unto us,” and Word and sacraments marks of true church and true Christian⁵¹ While the Puritans
did always identify these as the true marks, the most important mark of a true church among the
growing Independent party seemed to be (a) true conversions of individual members and (b)
independent polity Both of these, of course, were matters of discipline and, more than that,
matters of determining the authenticity of one’s membership beyond the traditional definitions of
ecclesiastical discipline

One might argue that this difference has more to do with the changes taking place (either seen
in terms of continuity or discontinuity with Calvin) than in churchmanship, nevertheless, Bishop
Ussher was not only writing at the same time as the later Puritans, but was wholly in sympathy
with the Puritan agenda, save on the issue of ecclesiology Notice Ussher’s reiteration of the
Calvinian view of the church as corporate and imperfect in this world

Why is this Church called Holy? Because she hath washed her robes in the blood of the Lambe,
and being sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the Word, is presented and
accepted as holy before God (Rev 7 14 Eph 5 26,27 Col 1 21,22) For though the Church on the
earth be in it selfe sinfull, yet in Christ the head it is holy, and in the life to come shall be brought
to perfection of holinesse⁵²

Emphasis on “gathered churches,” in distinction to “parishes,” meant that the Congregationalists
were driven by what many Puritan Episcopalians and Presbyterians considered a streak of
perfectionism and sectarian enthusiasm⁵³ On the ground, this had to have a great deal to do with
the way the average layperson understood his or her relationship to God and to the church
Specifically, the more exclusive definitions of the church, and the emphasis on its being “gathered”

and “separated” from “the world” (i.e., the parish) surely had the effect of heightening the sensitivity of individuals to the veracity of their own conversion. There is a definite link between the question, “Is this a true church?” and, “Am I a true Christian?” Even someone as much of a high Calvinist as John Owen, when it came to ecclesiology, could say,

The Scripture doth in general represent the kingdom or church of Christ to consist of persons called *saints*, separated from the world. Those who know aught of these things will not profess that persons openly profane, vicious, sensual, wicked, and ignorant, are approved and owned of Christ as the subjects of his kingdom, or that it is his will that we should receive them into the communion of the church, 2 Tim 3 1-5 ⁵⁴

At first, this may sound like Calvin, in his demand for liberty of the church in its ecclesiastical affairs, but notice that Calvin was in a parish situation and what he was demanding from the civil authorities was not freedom to create a “gathered congregation,” amongst other so-constituted churches in the city, but to discipline *members* who were precisely what Owen here regards as unsuitable for even being admitted in the first place ⁵⁵. In contrast, Calvin states,

Individual men who, by their profession of religion, are reckoned within such churches, even though they may actually be strangers to the church, still in a sense belong to it until they have been rejected by public judgment. We do not by our vote approve such persons as members of the church, but we leave to them such place as they occupy among the people of God until it is lawfully taken from them ⁵⁶

So opposed to sectarian enthusiasm is Calvin that he insists that so long as the ministry Word and sacraments remains, regardless of the corruption of its members, it is still a true church.

For the Lord esteems the communion of his church so highly that he counts as a traitor and apostate from Christianity anyone who arrogantly leaves any Christian society, provided it cherishes the true ministry of Word and sacraments ⁵⁷

Discipline of Members

With a covenant as the basis for membership, the discipline of members was settled. Contrary

to John Goodwin's characterization, Thomas Goodwin maintains that the "keys of the kingdom" are given to all Christians, not just officers⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it is the officers ("ruling elders") who are called by both God and the congregation to exercise discipline in their behalf Thomas Goodwin suggested a periodical special meeting, "a spiritual conference, to gain experience of each other's improvements in grace,"⁵⁹ which was probably no more than a fellowship conference or retreat in contemporary terms These meetings were opportunities for weaker believers to recognize in the experience of others the working of the Spirit in their own lives which, by virtue of the weakness of their faith, they were before unable to observe They would mutually encourage, comfort, and strengthen the members in their movement toward the faith of assurance, and it is quite likely that this rather distinctive practice was learned from Dutch pietists during Goodwin's sojourn there⁶⁰

The Scottish Presbyterians also held periodical conferences during their "season" of Communion After weeks of preparation, the people would gather for special enjoyment of Word and Sacrament Goodwin complains of this practice, however "In Scotland, also, a good and holy minister, in repute, cometh to a place, and when thousands of people gather about him from far and near to hear him preach, ordinarily such a minister useth to administer to them the sacrament also"⁶¹ This is lax discipline, he argues, since it is impossible for the officiating minister to know the conditions and professions of everyone in the meeting Church discipline, Goodwin argued, must be exercised on the local level and the test must not only be negative but positive Only under these circumstances, therefore, could the sacraments must be administered The climax of church discipline, of course, is excommunication, in the case of those who simply

refuse to repent. Goodwin argues that giving a person over to Satan is not merely a negative ejection from fellowship, but a positive delivery and act of authority, like giving up a man to the jailor, “though there be hope that he may be recalled again”⁶²

But correct and exact discipline does not imply a harsh or rash discipline. In fact, as Calvin also argued, the proper exercise and maintenance of discipline may be the only thing that keeps ministers from tyrannizing their congregations and Goodwin recognizes this

We reply first, that there have been very few excommunications in the world that have been from those that have had the right power of doing it, and those excommunications which have been administered by the rightful persons yet have not been due, because proceeding on too slight occasions, and such as have not deserved excommunication. 2 They have in their excommunication trusted more to the power of the magistrate, when it should have come to a writ de excommunicato capiendo, or to horning of a man in Scotland, banishing him, or depriving him of his estate, &c, they have confided, I say, in the magistrate’s power, and in his punishment, more than in excommunication, or else why have the recourse to it to make a man repent? But because they put confidence in an arm of the flesh to bring him in, as if that were more an effectual means than the power of God, therefore God makes his ordinance to be but as an arm of the flesh, and to have no other effect or fruit than what the magistrate’s punishment hath.⁶³

Here Goodwin echoes Calvin’s concern that discipline be recovered from the secular arm. It is worth noting, with Toon, that the Millenary Petition presented to James by the Puritans upon his accession, called for moderate reforms, including *fewer* excommunications for minor offenses.⁶⁴ Excommunication is administered rashly and by the wrong persons when a church is not ordered according to biblical discipline. Furthermore, Goodwin is not interested in bringing members under discipline for all sins.

It is scandalous sin that is the matter of censure, sin judged so by common light, and received principles, sin that goes afore to judgment, that you may read afar off, 1 Tim v 24. Doubtful disputations and sins controverted are not to be made the subject of church censures, for if the weak are not to be received to such, then neither are they to be cast out for such.⁶⁵

Part Two The Sacraments

The Word and the Sacraments both equally preach Christ, Goodwin argues, in line with the Reformed tradition generally. The Word is essential because it is the material with which the Holy Spirit creates faith. God chose preaching because it is the most difficult form of communication to make into an idol, Goodwin holds.

An evident instance whereof we have in this, that whereas God ordained but two means to convey the gospel to us, one by the word preached to the ear, the other to the eye in the sacraments, which are visible signs (and as Christ is preached in the one, so in the other, and indeed no more in the one than in the other), yet corrupt nature made an idol of the sacrament, and never of preaching, and this men did, though God chose the meanest things to these signs, even bread and wine. Our first parents took their infidelity in by the ear, and therefore God thought good to let faith in the same way. But the simplest can ordinarily hear as well as the wisest, and so the poor to come to receive the gospel, who otherwise would want it.⁶⁶

The preaching of the Word itself is sacramental, Goodwin argues. In a statement similar to the Second Helvetic Confession of Faith, drafted by Bullinger, Goodwin writes, "It is the meaning of the Word which is the Word indeed, it is the sense of it which is its soul. Now, preaching in a more special manner reveals God's Word."⁶⁷ But as God works through the weakness of human speech to communicate faith, grace, and assurance, so he works through the weakness of water, bread, and wine, to communicate the same gifts of the Gospel.

Hence our sacraments (which are the seals added to the word of faith) do primarily exhibit Christ unto a believer, and so, in him, all other promises, as of forgiveness, &c, are ratified and confirmed by them. Now there is the same reason of them, that there is of the promises of the gospel, for they preach the gospel to the eye, as the promise doth to the ear, and therefore as in them the soul is first to look at Christ and embrace him as tendered in them, and then at the promises tendered with him in them, and not to take the sacraments as bare seals of pardon and forgiveness, so, in like manner, in receiving of, or having recourse to a promise, which is the word of faith, we are first to seek out for Christ in it, as being the foundation of it, and so to take hold of the promise in him. And without this, to rest on the bare promise, or to look to the benefit

promised, without eyeing Christ, is not an evangelical, but a Jewish faith, even such as the formalists among the Jews had, who without the Messiah closed with promises, and rested in types to cleanse them, without looking unto Christ the end of them, and as propounded to their faith in them. This is to go to God without a mediator, and to make the promises of the gospel to be as the promises of the law.⁶⁸

Therefore, Goodwin continues with his christocentric interest. Neither the Word nor the sacraments are to direct our attention to themselves as the object of faith, they are designed to introduce us and link us to Christ through faith.

Sacramental Grace vs Predestinating Grace?

Nicholas Tyacke has offered cogent arguments for a contrast between the “sacramental grace” of the Laudians and the “predestinating grace” of the Puritans, and that this contradiction accounts for the tension.⁶⁹ But is this a legitimate contrast?

Predestinating grace is not only not at odds with sacramental grace for the leading Puritans, the two are complimentary. In Perkins, for instance, we even see the syllogism and sacrament merge: “All such as are converted, rightly using the sacraments, shall receive Christ and His graces. But I am converted, either now do or have done before rightly used the sacraments. Therefore I shall receive Christ and His graces.”⁷⁰ “A man may say, Christ is mine, his benefits are mine also, as truly and certainly as my land is mine own.”⁷¹ And the sacraments lend a prime hand in bringing about just that certainty. Perkins says that

in this washing of baptism there is propounded and sealed a marvellous solemn covenant and contract first, of God with the baptised, that God the Father vouchsafeth to receive him into favour, the Son to redeem him, the Holy Ghost to purify and regenerate him secondly, of the baptised with God, who promiseth to acknowledge and invoke, worship none other God but the true Jehovah which is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,⁷²

and “The Lord’s Supper is a medicine to the diseased and languishing soul and therefore men

must as well seek to purify and heal their souls in it, as to bring pure and sound hearts to it," as in it he increases our faith and repentance⁷³ In fact, the emphasis on "means" one finds in the Puritans includes the sacraments Here, predestination and the sacraments are actually linked in the emphasis on preparation and means In fact, in his *Dialogue*, in which he gathers the best of Tyndale and Bradford, Perkins puts a question in the mouth of "Timotheus"

What means do you find most effectual to strengthen your faith, to increase God's graces in you and to raise you up again when you are fallen? E Surely I have very great comfort by the sacrament of the Lord's Supper For whereas I am spiritually diseased and am prone and ready to fall and am most cruelly oftentimes invaded of the fiend, the flesh and the law when I have sinned and am put to flight and made to run away from God my father, therefore hath God of all mercy and of his infinite pity and botomless compassion set up his sacrament as a sign on an high hill, whence it may be sen on every side, far and near, to call again them that be run away And with the sarament he, as it were clocketh to them, as a hen doth for her chickens, to gather them under the wings of his mercy⁷⁴

Even the believer is sent back to his or her baptism for comfort in times of doubting, since the unregenerate "cannot comprehend the light of the scriptures, but they read them as men do tales of Robing Hoods, as riddles, or as old priests their ladies' Matins which they understand not " Therefore, says Perkins, "until a man be taught his baptism, that his heart feel the sweetness of it, the scriptures are shut up from him and so dark that he could not understand it, though Peter, Paul or Christ himself did expound it unto him "⁷⁵ Again, this is at odds with Tyacke's central idea of sacramental grace versus predestinating grace Here is an example of someone who recognizes the necessity of both for the common divine objective⁷⁶ Four testimonies serve to assure the believer "The third is, that this testimonie is found and perceived in the use of the word, praier, sacraments " This testimony is especially given and felt in the time of great danger and

affliction ⁷⁷ One more example from this formative divine should suffice

The word preached is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes and the end of the sacrament is to communicate Christ with all his benefits to them that come to be partakers thereof, as is most plainly to be seen in the supper of the Lord, in which the giving of bread and wine to the several communicants is a pledge and sign of God's particular giving of Christ's body and blood with all his merits unto them And this giving on God's part cannot be effectual without receiving on our parts and therefore faith must needs be an instrument or hand to receive that which God giveth, that we may find comfort by his giving ⁷⁸

Nor is the merely an emphasis in the earlier Puritans, one finds it in Thomas Doolittle's *A Treatise Concerning the Lord's Supper*, first published in 1667 ⁷⁹ While there is certainly a rejection of what the Puritans regarded as sacerdotalism and superstition, they had too high a view of and too central a role for the sacraments to allow Tyacke's thesis to bear the weight he places on it While Calvinists universally rejected an *ex opere operato* role for the sacraments, this was not due directly to their doctrine of predestination The sacramental debate is a separate, though related, issue and ought not be the antithesis to one's position in the predestination debate It is possible for an Arminian to deny to the sacraments any objective efficacy without adopting a Calvinistic soteriology, as became the case among General Baptists and Quakers

Baptism

Ideal in our consideration of assurance is our baptism, says Goodwin "We contribute nothing, but are merely passive Therefore, an infant is as capable of all the essentials of regeneration as a man grown up, and therefore of baptism" ⁸⁰ In fact, in his commentary on Ephesians, Goodwin argues that baptism is necessary, not for divine favor, but to assure us of divine favor, so that "the inward work here of Sealing answereth to the outward work of Baptism" ⁸¹ Even infants are to be supposed inwardly regenerated before their baptism, "but the Seal of the Spirit cometh as the fruit

of Baptism, which is the proper work of it. So now you see, that sealing is an assurance of salvation.”⁸² The testimony of faith, nor the testimony of sanctification, nor the testimony of baptism can comfort apart from the Holy Spirit and this is a ruling emphasis in Goodwin’s exegesis. His emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit neither takes away from his christological focus, nor does it lead to enthusiasm, since it is still linked to the means. Nevertheless, “the immediate testimony of the Holy Spirit” is greater than all.⁸³

Thus, Goodwin distinguishes between the inward and outward baptism, while preserving the relationship between the two. Goodwin is not speaking out of school here, since the relation of the the sign and the thing signified has always been a close one in the Reformed tradition on this point.⁸⁴ While Nicholas Tyacke makes a sharp distinction between those with a high view of sacramental grace and those with a high view of predestinating grace,⁸⁵ here we see that one does not necessarily cancel out the other. It is worth noting that the Heidelberg Catechism’s discussion of the sacraments begins where its section on faith ends, with the transitional question, “Since, then, faith alone makes us share in Christ and all his benefits, where does such faith originate?”, answering, “The Holy Spirit creates it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel and confirms it by the use of his holy sacraments.”⁸⁶ Baptism, according to Goodwin, is a sign and seal to our belonging to this war God declared in Paradise against Satan.⁸⁷ It is indeed even “the seal of regeneration” and “the whole of salvation, and of all that ever God did for us, or will do for us from first to last. ‘There is one faith, one baptism, one hope of your calling,’ Eph iv.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, the baptismal formula sets forth the trinitarian framework of redemption that Goodwin has been following, in keeping with the tradition generally. Therefore, Baptism is adequate to set forth the whole object of our faith and salvation is transacted as

by parts, by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, therefore says Christ of that ordinance, 'Baptize them,' distinctly and distributively, 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' and not in their name in common only⁸⁹

In spite of the objective emphasis on baptism, drawing the believer out of himself or herself,

Goodwin is concerned to avert a casual view of baptism that renders conversion, faith, and

repentance unnecessary or unimportant

Few scholars beat their heads about fearing to live in that estate they are afraid to die in. Now for the decision of the controversy, rest not only in searching the church book, and there finding you are baptized, in Mark xvi 16, 'He that believes and is baptized,' says Christ, 'he shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.' Suppose he be baptized, whether think you will Christ's words prove true or no? As in Simon Magus they did, God putting no more difference between a Turk and an unregenerate man, though baptized, than of old he did between a Jew and a heathen, Jer ix 26. But search you this sacred register of heaven, which is the great inquest of life and death. And there you shall find that he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, 1 Pet iv 1, therefore he that lies in any known sin cannot be saved. There you shall find if you make credit, or preferment, or anything but God's glory, your end, you cannot believe. John v 44⁹⁰

One must not take faith for granted and conclude that baptism is all that is necessary. Apart from faith, baptism seals and secures absolutely nothing and those who have no intention to profess faith and turn from their wickedness are not to comfort themselves with this sacrament.

Nevertheless, as the Savoy, Lesser Catechism, put it, baptism is "a holy ordinance, whereby, being sprinkled with water according to Christ's institution, we are by his grace made children of God and have the promises of the covenant sealed unto us"⁹¹

The Lord's Supper

Unlike Perkins and Owen, Goodwin does not spend much space setting forth a doctrine of the eucharist, as he simply assumes the Reformed position. Nevertheless, his images are pregnant and offer an insight into his own contribution to the discussion. For instance, referring to the Holy

Spirit, Goodwin states, "He also follows us to the sacrament, and in that glass shews us Christ's face smiling on us, and through his face his heart, and thus helping of us to a sight of him, we go away rejoicing that we saw our Saviour that day"⁹² Goodwin speaks as surely of having seen Christ as if he had seen a neighbor and this is due in part to his emphasis on faith as "a sight" of Christ. As we have seen, Goodwin believes that this spiritual sight of Christ as justifier of the ungodly is as certain and convincing as seeing with our physical eyes. Through the Supper, we are given a mirror in which the Spirit "shews us Christ's face smiling on us,"⁹³ and this is essential for assurance. But just as the testimony of the Word, faith, sanctification, and baptism offer no consolation apart from the Holy Spirit, so too this sacrament depends on the "Lord and giver of life" for its efficacy.⁹⁴

Goodwin does give us some propositional insight into his view in other places, however. Bread and wine not only represent and signify, but "convey to us the body and blood of Christ [which] is by special institution, because it is beyond the nature of the thing"⁹⁵ Although it is beyond the nature of bread and wine to convey someone's body and blood, by God's will, sacraments "have a special efficacy in them"⁹⁶ Far from opposing predestinating grace, Goodwin believes that sacramental grace, which truly conveys the body and blood of Christ through bread, wine, and faith, confirms, strengthens, and assures the believer that he or she is elect.⁹⁷

But Goodwin is not uncharacteristic of the Reformed eucharistic views. In fact, as Jill Rait points out, Beza and Farel reached concord with the Lutherans that read, in part,

We confess, therefore in the Supper of the Lord not only the benefits of Christ, but also the very substance of the Son of man, by which I mean the true flesh (which the eternal Word assumed in the perpetual unity of his person, in which he was born and suffered and rose for us and ascended into heaven) and that true blood which he poured out for us.⁹⁸

The Zurich theologians Bullinger and Vermigli strongly disagreed with this concord, and both had a tremendous impact on the Elizabethan Church, especially with the latter's personal presence at Oxford. Nevertheless, these views of representative Puritans cited above demonstrate that many of the Puritan divines seem more congenial to a real presence than the more Zwinglian view found in Cranmer and a number of leading churchmen of traditional conformity,⁹⁹ so that it is difficult to anachronistically read the "low church" and "high church" distinctions into the pre-Laudian context. In his tract, *The Reformed Catholicke*, Perkins lays out the Puritan doctrine "Of Real Presence"

We hold and believe a presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and that no feigned but a true and real presence which must be considered two ways first, in respect of the signs, secondly, in respect of the communicants

For the first, we hold and teach that Christ's body and blood are truly present with the bread and wine, being signs in the sacrament. But how? Not in respect of place or co-existence, but by sacramental relation on this manner. When a word is uttered, the sound comes to the ear and at the same instant the thing signified comes to the mind and thus by relation the word and the thing spoken of are both present together. Even so at the Lord's table bread and wine must not be considered barely as subsistences and creatures, but as outward signs in relation to the body and blood of Christ. God the Father, according to the evangelical covenant, gives Christ in his sacrament as really and truly as anything can be given unto man, not part and piecemeal, as we say, but whole Christ, God and man, on this sort. In Christ there be two natures, the godhead and manhood. The godhead is not given in regard of substance or essence, but only in regard of efficacy, merits and operation conveyed thence to the manhood. And further in this sacrament, Christ's whole manhood is given both body and soul in this order. First of all is given the very manhood in respect of substance and that really. Secondly, the merits and benefits thereof, as namely the satisfaction performed by and in the manhood to the justice of God.¹⁰⁰

Through the sacrament, then, there is a real union with Christ, according to both natures, as he is giving and the believer is only receiving. "Considering there is a real union, and consequently a real communion between us and Christ as I have proved, there must needs be such a kind of presence wherein Christ is truly and present to the heart of him that receives the sacrament in faith."¹⁰¹ With regard to the Roman view, "We differ not touching the presence itself, but only in

the manner of presence. For though we hold a real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, yet we do not take it to be local, bodily or substantial, but spiritual and mystical, to the signs by sacramental relation and to the communicants by faith alone."¹⁰²

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680), also an Independent, offered the Supper for the gaining of assurance. Note the "preparation" for the Supper, the introspection that ostensibly guides the entire Puritan movement, in the diary selection from a former Puritan minister and friend of Brooks:

Instance, April 3, 1653. Upon search I find, 1 Myself an undone creature 2 That the Lord Jesus sufficiently satisfied as Mediator the Law for sin 3 That he is freely offered in the Gospel 4 So far as I know my own heart, I do through mercy heartily consent, that he only shall be my Saviour, not my works or duties, which I do only in obedience to him 5 If I know my heart, I would be ruled by his Word and Spirit.¹⁰³

It is undeniable that Communion was frequently an opportunity for weak believers to despair once more and deny themselves the comfort of the sacrament because they could not discover enough graces within themselves.¹⁰⁴ A Reformed divine would have no objection to the directions Doolittle offers in preparing for Communion, but one wonders how easily weaker believers might struggle in the quantification of such experience. While the discontinuity thesis might overstate the contrast between Calvin and the Puritans, there is a note of conditionality in the invitation to the sacrament that one finds in the latter that is not emphasized in the former. For Calvin, it is more of an objective means of grace than the reward of sanctification. Calvin writes, "What I have said is not to be understood as if the force and truth of the sacrament depended upon the condition or choice of him who receives it. For what God has ordained remains firm and keeps its own nature, however men may vary."¹⁰⁵ Those who come to the table of the Lord must bring their faith and

cannot be unrepentant, but the principal action is divine. God is giving the believer his grace, and that is the focus of Calvin's eucharistic theology. "Therefore, let it be regarded as a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace." Nevertheless, there is a secondary sense in which the sacraments involve our agreement with God.¹⁰⁶

But it is essential that one distinguishes abuse of introspection from such questions themselves. Surely, the self-examination that these pastors believed to have been required by the apostle Paul had to be answered in some manner, and, as this instance illustrates, not all cases led to despair, nor indeed to anything more than a recognition of one's sinfulness and need for Christ as the believer's justification and sanctification. There is no rejection of the sacraments apart from a rejection of Christ himself, Goodwin demands, with the Quakers probably in his sights. "You must in effect renounce your profession if you renounce this practise."¹⁰⁷

The sacraments, being more than mere symbols or tokens in themselves, nevertheless actually convey Christ and his benefits to the believer because of the work of the Holy Spirit, bringing efficacy to such creatures. Goodwin ties the certainty conveyed by the sacraments to the faith of assurance rather than to the direct act of faith (recumbency). "And therefore the sacraments of the Lord's supper and baptism, which are seals and instruments of assurance, are to be administered after a man hath faith, or is supposed to be in a state of grace. They are not to begin grace, but to confirm it, whereas were faith assurance, they might begin it."¹⁰⁸ This is not to deny infant baptism, since Goodwin clearly held to the doctrine, but underscores his conviction that baptism is not the cause (material, efficient, instrumental, or otherwise) of the first faith, although it may

generate the faith of assurance

Goodwin follows the traditional Reformed interpretation of the Supper as a “representation to our faith,” comparing it to the brass serpent in the wilderness. Although Jesus Christ is in the heavens, “the church, his body, of which he is the head, 1 Cor. 12, is Christ mystically,” and therefore, “the sacraments are Christ mysteriously or spiritually, so as in them we see and behold Christ really and spiritually, partake of him, and have to do with him as if we were present with him. Gal. iii. 1, ‘Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you,’ that is, as really as if he had been crucified among them, as he was once at Jerusalem.”¹⁰⁹

When Christ says, ‘My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed,’

It is not fancy only, as when a man dreams he eats, but if ever thou hast found a reality, a solidity, a subsistence in any meat thou hast ever eaten and digested, there is (according to Christ’s institution) a greater reality unto faith in this sacrament. The apostle also calls faith, ‘a discerning of the Lord’s body,’ 1 Cor. xi. 29.¹¹⁰

Therefore, one should not view the Supper as a memorial, but as the gift of Christ given then and there.

Let me now make an home push upon thee. Hast thou been at a sacrament? and hadst thou true and real faith? That faith did or would have set thee down by the cross, as Mary was, and thou mightest stand by and behold all, and not only go over it in a way of fancy as over any other story, but in a way of subsistence of things not seen, as well past as present or to come.¹¹¹

We take this sacrament “with profession that we hope and believe we are the persons for whom he hath done all this.” Such faith of assurance may be lacking, but the “it may be” grows with the believer’s careful attendance upon the means. Not only is the sacrament essential for the believer’s assurance, it is the motivation for his or her growth in godliness.

And if we are about to sin, the thoughts of Christ crucified, as renewed at such a sacrament, do or should come in and haunt us. And if we should notwithstanding indulge sin, and not divert

from it, how do we aggravate thereby our sins against him, and provoke and tempt him! For if Christ crucified thus so oft appears and stands in our way, and yet we go on to sin, it is worse than what the dumb ass did at the apparition of an angel, and as bad as Balaam's course was, who was reprov'd. It is a certain truth that what was intended as the greatest blessing, if abused, is turned into the greatest curse. And to have the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, which Christ by being made a curse purchased, turned into a curse, how great a curse must that be! Thou eatest and drinkest poison if thou comest in thy sins, or if thy participation of the ordinance doth thee no good against thy sins, and so thou art guilty of thine own death and soul's blood also, as well as of Christ's death. It will rot thy soul, as the water the woman drank did her, Num v 27, 28. So shall thy soul be cursed if thou returnest not ¹¹²

Goodwin's view of the Supper is part of the English Reformed consensus, bearing no distinctive interpretation. The mode is spiritual in that the Holy Spirit is the one who raises the believer's faith to the heavens, but that which is received is none other than Christ himself. To be sure, the bread and wine do not undergo transubstantiation, and "all the spiritual change is wrought by the faith of the receiver, not the words of the giver," but "to them that believe, they are the body and blood of Christ."¹¹³ There is, therefore, no notable difference between the Puritan view of the sacraments and those of the conformist clergy before Laud. For Nowell, the Lord's Supper is much more than a symbolic memorial, it is a "seal and pledge." "For God forbid that we should think that God mocketh and deceiveth us with vain figures."¹¹⁴ Here, Nowell employs the unmistakable language of the theologian who wishes to ally himself with Calvin over Zwingli. There are two parts of the Supper, as well as baptism, Nowell argues. "The one part, the bread and wine, the outward signs, which are seen with our eyes, handled with our hands, and felt with our taste, the other part, Christ himself, with whom our souls, as with their proper food, are inwardly nourished." Further, there is "not an only figure, but the truth itself delivered in the Supper."¹¹⁵ We feed on him by faith, by lifting our hearts to heaven through the Spirit ¹¹⁶

What does it mean to be prepared for Communion? This is an important question for assurance if the primary purpose of the sacrament is to strengthen faith and assurance. If no one may lawfully receive this gift without extensive preparation or apart from an assured conscience, a corresponding despair would not be surprising. For the earlier tradition, closely tied to Calvin, preparation was rather general. For instance, Alexander Nowell states,

First, if we heartily repent us of our sins, which drove Christ to death, next, if we stay ourselves and rest upon a sure hope of God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of our redemption purchased by his death. Moreover, if we conceive an earnest mind and determined purpose to lead our life godly hereafter. Finally, if, seeing in the Lord's Supper is contained a tokening of friendship and love

to one's neighbor.¹¹⁷ But then the Elizabethan divine is careful not to make the tender conscience anxious about coming to the table.

Is any man able fully and perfectly to perform all these things that thou speakes of? Full perfection in all points, wherein nothing may be lacking, cannot be found in man so long as he abideth in this world. Yet ought not the imperfection that holdeth us keep us back from coming to the Lord's Supper, which the Lord willed to be a help to our imperfection and weakness. Yea, if we were perfect, there should be no more need of any use of the Lord's Supper among us. But here to these things that I have spoken of do tend, that every man bring with him to the Supper, repentance, faith, and charity, so near as possibly may be, sincere and unfeigned.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, Nowell declares, a minister may not keep hypocrites from the Supper unless the scandal is public and the officers consent, after private rebuke and counsel have been spurned.¹¹⁹

Here we probably find the greatest cleavage between Calvin (represented here by Nowell) and some of the later Puritans on the Supper, since, as reflected in Nowell's remark, the Calvinian understanding was that only those who are *scandalous* in their lifestyle may be, at least for the time being, regarded as unrepentant. The emphasis of the Westminster divines was not on the worthiness of the recipient, but on the efficacy of the sacrament.¹²⁰ As von Rohr states their position, the sacraments "have an objectivity which can be relied upon in their mediation of the promises," citing Francis Taylor's remark that "the right use of the Sacraments assures us of Gods

favour”¹²¹ While not entirely rejecting this aspect, the idea was emerging in some Puritan circles, parallel to similar movements in Dutch pietism, that an intense period of self-examination and introspection had to precede the administration and reception of Holy Communion¹²² Rather than seeing the Supper as the *means* of grace, it was almost as if it was by some being regarded as the *terminus a quo*. In other words, it was seen as something for which one had to be made worthy, rather than as something whose intention was to communicate the worth of Christ to the believing and repentant sinner¹²³ It is worth noting that Bishop Ussher reflects this interest in preparation for Communion, warning that those who do not possess assurance should not receive the sacrament¹²⁴ Goodwin does not view the Supper in this strict preparationist manner, viewing it in the more traditionally Reformed sense of giving rather than requiring assurance Goodwin’s advice also differs from Ussher’s in the case of not receiving a benefit from the Supper In such a case, says the Bishop of Armagh, one is to “descend into himself” to discover the “fly in the ointment”¹²⁴

Conclusion

Goodwin’s ecclesiology, which many of his Reformed contemporaries regarded as the Independent revival of Donatism,¹²⁵ required a pure congregation, in covenant together before God In the more traditional Reformed ecclesiology, the assembly is a mixed company of elect and reprobate, growing up together until the final harvest, when God sorts out the differences Goodwin did not insist on rigorous tests to distinguish true from false or temporary faith, nor did he issue strict doctrinal or moral guidelines for membership But he did believe that “the visible church” meant a local assembly of believers who could offer a credible profession of faith and submit to the doctrinal and moral discipline of the elders

Is it possible that the growing desire for a “pure church” that one notices in New England during the Laudian period and England itself under Cromwell is somehow at the base of the emphasis on true and temporary faith, preparation, duties, and the like? Perhaps scholars have spent too much time looking for the source of Puritan anxiety in its soteriology or systematic structure without paying sufficient attention to ecclesiology. It is here where the average Puritan layperson came most directly face-to-face with the realities of Puritan theology. When one wished to join a church described by Goodwin, he or she had to understand the “spiritual” nature of the church, while tests over supra- and infralapsarianism were not a normal requirement for church membership.

As for the sacraments, Goodwin clearly adopts a more Calvinian-Bezan view than the view of Zwingli and Bullinger. Nevertheless, since Zwingli’s view was actually preferred early on by leading churchmen, Tyacke’s insistence on a polarity between predestinating and sacramental grace seems to read too much of the sacerdotal debates under Laud into a prior condition. As we have seen, some of the leading Puritans were more convinced of Christ’s real presence (and, therefore, objective orientation) in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper than were some, such as Cranmer and many of the Tudor clergy, who would not be normally characterized as “puritans.” Only with the return of sacerdotalism as a possibility within a Reformed Church, under Laud, does the label of Puritanism come to stand in sharp contrast to a prevailing view within the established church.

To the extent that the sacraments are viewed as (a) mere symbols or (b) a goal of sanctifying grace to be achieved by intense preparation rather than the means of sanctifying grace through which the Holy Spirit works efficaciously, to that extent the “testimonie” of the water and the blood lose their ability to bring assurance of faith. To the degree that the sacraments are seen as the

activity of the believer for God rather than the activity of God for the believer, to that degree they will become the *terminus a quo* rather than the *terminus ad quem* of sanctification. Thus, when the conditionality of the covenant became emphasized, to the exclusion of the unconditional and absolute promises, the sacraments were easily viewed more as the reward for meeting certain conditions rather than promises, and intense introspection led many without a firm experience of assurance and holiness of life to refuse the table of the Lord.¹²⁶

Goodwin embraced an ecclesiology that was liable to create an even greater emphasis on conditionality, introducing congregational covenants that required a “purer” church than was comfortable to most Reformed divines. It is only his attentiveness and commitment to “Christ set forth” that mitigates what could have been a more conditional emphasis. Further, his view of the sacraments preserved this older Reformed emphasis on absolute promise and provided a bulwark for his christocentric, objective soteriology. In New England, these issues would come to a head in the Antinomian Controversy, but they would also distinguish similar developments in Holland. It is quite likely, therefore, that his devotion to a rigid scholastic, federal Calvinism actually preserved Goodwin from with-holding these means of assuring grace from the weakest believer, including those who did not possess any assurance, rather than insisting upon such prerequisites.

Nevertheless, Goodwin’s vision of Independent church life, organized around a local covenant that included only “true believers” (in so far as one could tell), doubtless heightened the individual’s sensitivity and anxiety about temporary faith and assurance. Without such a commitment to the centrality and unconditionality of absolute promises, and the view of the sacraments consistent with that, Goodwin’s ecclesiology may well have served to discourage weak

believers. And without Goodwin's emphasis, holding together the unconditional and conditional, nature and grace, means of grace and the Spirit, justification and sanctification, the objective certainty of faith and the wavering nature of assurance, such an ecclesiology might well have been responsible for both the enthusiasm and the conditional emphasis that erupted in the antinomian controversies of the day.

Notes to Chapter Eleven

1 Named after Thomas Erastus (1524-83), Erastianism advocates the subordination of ecclesiastical authority to the prince. Himself a Swiss Reformed physician, Erastus was a professor at Heidelberg and opposed Geneva's polity. The debate at Heidelberg erupted when Ursinus, professor of divinity, advocated the Genevan model and Erastus defended Zurich's governmental control of religious affairs. According to the *Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, Jerald C. Brauer, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), "His doctrines were influential, particularly in England, where Richard Hooker defended the supremacy of the secular power" (p. 306). See especially Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, edited by Arthur S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). In his preface, Hooker provides a very useful survey of the debate over Genevan vs. Erastian polity.

2 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 15, Section 5.

3 Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.16.32 and 4.17.1-2, and his commentary on 1 Cor. 11.25. Also, The Westminster Confession, Chapter XIV, "Of Saving Faith," like The Heidelberg Catechism, discusses the sacraments in the context of obtaining saving faith. "The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened." Further, in Chapter XVIII, assurance is said to be attained "without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means." This is the point Perkins makes concerning baptism: "When a man is in danger of the shipwreck of his soul, this is a plank on which to swim to safety," cited in John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought*, *op cit*, p. 178. Note the replacement of penance with baptism in Perkins' probably intentional twist on Aquinas's definition of the former as "a second plank after a shipwreck," (*Summa*, Q. 84, Sixth Article, Pt. III). Rather than looking to the use of another means of grace, Perkins counsels the assurance-seeking believer to look to the surety of the divine promise in baptism.

4 Thomas Goodwin's discussion of ecclesiology appears in its thorough treatment in volume 11 of his *Works*, in the Nichol's edition, *op cit*.

5 Cited in Henry Wilder Foote, ed., *The Cambridge Platform of 1648: Tercentenary Commemoration* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949), p. 39.

6 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 31.

7 George Gillespie, *The Works of George Gillespie*, volume 2 (Edmonton, Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991; reprint from 1846 edition), pp. 9-107. Originally published in 1644.

- 8 Henry Wilder Foote, ed , *The Cambridge Platform, op cit* , pp 79-80
- 9 *ibid*
- 10 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4 1 7
- 11 Robert S Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord, op cit*
- 12 Henry Wilder Foote, ed , *The Cambridge Platform, op cit* , p 15
- 13 Robert S Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord, op cit* , pp 376 ff , where Baillie’s invectives are directed to the Independent party
- 14 George Gillespie, *The Works of George Gillespie*, volume 2 (Edmonton, Canada Still Waters Revival Books, 1991 reprint from 1846 edition, pp 9-107 Originally published in 1644
- 15 *ibid*
- 16 *ibid*
- 17 Goodwin, 11 287
- 18 After warning against judging between true and false believer, Calvin writes, “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists” (4 1 9) Cf the note of Battles “Important as discipline is for Calvin, he does not distinctly make it one of the notae, or marks, by which the church is recognized, as does Bucer, *Scripta Anglicana*, p 36 (footnote 18)
- 19 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4 2 1
- 20 Calvin, *Psalms* II 263
- 21 Calvin, *Isaiah* II 211
- 22 Calvin, *Gal* 25
- 23 Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith, op cit* , pp 73-74
- 24 *ibid*
- 25 Battles’ footnote 18, in Calvin, *Institutes*, 4 1 9
- 26 The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 25, includes the two traditional marks and adds, “public worship performed more or less purely ”
- 27 *The Zurich Letters, 1558-1579, op cit* , offer ample illustrations of this point
- 28 *ibid*
- 29 For instance, William Perkins, Paul Baynes, Richard Sibbes and John Preston, along with their surrounding constellation, were conforming clergymen
- 30 See esp the disc of T C in Donald J McGinn, *John Penry and the Marprelate Controversy* (New Brunswick Rutgers, 1966)
- 31 With the Anabaptists in view, Calvin writes, “But though this temptation sometimes springs up even among good men from ill-advised zeal for righteousness, we shall perceive that this overscrupulousness is born rather of pride and arrogance and false opinion of holiness than of true holiness and true zeal for us ” He then cites Augustine for approval of this notion of leaving separation of wheat from tares to the last judgment (4 1 16)
- 32 Goodwin, 11 480
- 33 11 506
- 34 *ibid*
- 35 Calvin cites Augustine’s remark in the latter’s exposition of John’s Gospel, *Institutes*, 4 1 8
- 36 An example of this examination for church membership is supplied by Roland Bainton’s

reference to Thomas Lechford, and Independent pastor, whose *Plain Dealing* (London, 1642), counsels that candidates “must give evidence that ‘they have been wounded in their hearts for their originall sinne, and actuall transgressions, and can pitch upon some promise of free grace in the Scripture, for the ground of their faith, and that they fine their hearts drawne to beleve in Christ Jesus, for their justification and salvation ’” They then must promise to bind themselves to Christ and to each other (pp 80-1)

37 Goodwin, 11 529

38 *ibid*

39 This is a brush stroke that G F Nuttall seems to approve of throughout *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1992) Perhaps the best treatment of Independent and radical separatist ecclesiology is Stephen Brachlow’s *The Communion of Saints Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology 1570-1625* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1988)

40 Goodwin, 11 530, 532

41 Baillie had even written a full-length book against Brownism, so he tended to associate it with every Independent argument Cf Robert S Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord, op cit*, p 68

42 Goodwin, 11 533-4

43 *ibid*, p 530

44 *ibid*

45 *ibid*, pp 533-4

46 Ellen S More, “Congregationalism and the Social Order John Goodwin’s Gathered Church, 1640-60, *Journal of Ecclesiastical Hist*, Vol 38, No 2, April 1987 “Goodwin’s writings repeatedly reverted to the subject of his gathered church By 1649 the Church [he founded] was one of the most important in London,” starting from scratch “Its consistory, never so called by the church itself, included lay and clerical teachers, church wardens, elders and Goodwin himself as preacher Church elders regulated admission to communion Nevertheless, they were never set above or apart from the rest of the membership in any church document” (p 221) More points out the tragically schismatic character of the congregation

47 R T Kendall, for instance, nowhere in his thesis explores the relationship between Independent ecclesiology and a heightened anxiety over the personal experience of conversion and assurance It is conjecture to conclude that this may be due to Kendall’s own commitment to Independent polity

48 Alexander Nowell, *op cit*, p 172

49 *ibid*

50 Michael Jenkins, “John Cotton and the Antinomian Controversy,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, volume 43, pp 321-49

51 Alexander Nowell, *op cit*, pp 174-5

52 Archbishop Ussher, *op cit*, p 187

53 Cf Robert Baillie, *Dissuasive From the Errours of the Time* (1645) and also Richard Baxter’s *The Quaker’s Catechism* (1655)

54 Owen, 16 11 ff, cf Calvin, *Institutes* 4 1 9

55 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4 1 7-9

56 *ibid*, 4 1 9-10

57 *ibid*

58 Goodwin, 11 53 ff

59 11 353

60 Joel Beeke, *op cit*, p 117

61 11 415

62 11 44, 46-7

- 63 *ibid*
- 64 Peter Toon, *op cit*, p 20
- 65 Goodwin, 11 48
- 66 11 363
- 67 11 364
- 68 4 14-15
- 69 Nicholas Tyacke, *op cit*, where the entire work is devoted to fleshing out this interesting thesis
- 70 William Perkins, *Works, op cit*, 1 72
- 71 *ibid*, 3 594
- 72 Perkins, Breward edition of *Works, op cit*, p 220
- 73 *ibid*, p 224
- 74 *ibid*, p 375
- 75 *ibid*, p 378
- 76 Cited in Tyacke, *op cit*, pp 10, 19, 25
- 77 Perkins, *Commentary on Galatians, op cit*, pp 109-110
- 78 Perkins, Breward edition, p 539
- 79 Thomas Doolittle, *A Treatise Concerning the Lord's Supper* (1667), in Dewey Wallace, ed., *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans An Anthology* (Macon, GA Mercer University Press, 1987), pp 146-154
- 80 Goodwin, 8 412
- 81 Goodwin, *Commentary on Ephesians*, volume one of *Works* (London Jonathan Robinson, 1681), pp 201-2
- 82 *ibid*
- 83 *ibid*
- 84 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 27, Section 2
- 85 Nicholas Tyacke, *op cit*, where the entire work is devoted to fleshing out this interesting thesis
- 86 The Heidelberg Catechism, *op cit*, Question 65
- 87 11 266
- 88 *ibid*
- 89 11 534
- 90 11 552
- 91 Owen, 1 469, 4 154-6
- 92 Goodwin, 11 108
- 93 *ibid*
- 94 *ibid*
- 95 11 22
- 96 *ibid*
- 97 *ibid*
- 98 Jill Rait, *The Colloquy of Montbelliard* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1993), p 51
- 99 See Christopher J Cocksorth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp pp 9, 28, 34-35, 175, cf E C Whitaker, *Martin Bucer and the Book of Common Prayer* (Great Wakering Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1974)
- 100 Perkins, Breward edition, p 556-8
- 101 *ibid*
- 102 *ibid*

- 103 Thomas Brooks, *A Cabinet of Choice Jewels* (1669), in Dewey Wallace, ed , *The Spirituality of the Later Puritans An Anthology, op cit* , p 202
- 104 *ibid* , Doolittle, pp 145-154
- 105 *ibid*
- 106 Calvin, *Institutues*, 4 14 1,6,16-17,19
- 107 Goodwin, 44 11 39
- 108 8 346
- 109 11 308
- 110 *ibid*
- 111 11 314-17
- 112 *ibid*
- 113 *ibid*
- 114 Nowell, *op cit* ,p 208
- 115 *ibid* , pp 212-13
- 116 *ibid*
- 117 *ibid* , pp 216-18
- 118 *ibid*
- 119 *ibid*
- 120 John von Rohr, *op cit* , p 178
- 121 *ibid*
- 122 Joel Beeke, *op cit* , esp pp 117-120 and 366-7
- 123 Archbishop Ussher, *Catechism, op cit* , p 431
- 124 *ibid*
- 125 *ibid*
- 126 Robert Baillie, *op cit* With Edmund Calamy, Baillie was the chief critic of the Independent tendency
- 127 John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought, op cit* p 186

Chapter Twelve

Thomas Goodwin and The Reformed Tradition. Conclusions Concerning Continuity

In this brief compass, we have attempted to make the case for the significance of Thomas Goodwin in the development of high Calvinism and the continuity of Thomas Goodwin with Reformed theology in general and Calvin's thought in particular. The Puritans did genuinely believe that they were going directly to Scripture and did not accept a dependence upon Calvin any more than on Beza, Piscator, Pareus, or any of the other reformers and Post-Reformation scholastics. Nevertheless, they did come to the same conclusions in the main, and ended up fleshing out the trinitarian, christocentric theology of Zurich, Geneva, and Strasbourg, with a framework that gave greater clarity to emphases that were seminal in the Genevan reformer. As we conclude, then, we shall begin with the larger historiographical landscape, particularly in relation to alleged discontinuity between Calvin and English Calvinists and then attempt to place Goodwin himself within that broader tradition. We shall attempt to summarize the conclusions that have been anticipated in the introduction and argued throughout the thesis.

Federalism

The rise in interest in Puritan studies is often attributed to Perry Miller, not unjustly. Through his immensely popular thesis, many came to believe that Calvinism, meaning "federalism," was not really Calvinian. With the Creator entering into contractual obligations with the creature, Calvin's inscrutably "wild" deity was subdued and the reformer's alleged "determinism" was

softened to allow for a reciprocal relationship. Thus, the decree of Calvin is balanced with the bilateral covenant of his successors. This thesis was first made public in 1935, with his survey in *The Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, but more widely discovered in *The New England Mind*.¹

And yet, Miller himself was unhappy to see the uses made of his thesis. After witnessing various “popularizers” exploit and exaggerate his thesis, as though Puritanism had never really taught “Calvinism,” Miller declared in 1956, “Were I to rework this piece today--as I dare not--I should more strongly emphasize the underlying connection” between Calvin and the Puritan “Calvinists.”² As for those who would find in Perkins a bogeyman for reinventing the English Reformed tradition by mediating Beza’s reformulations, Miller relates, “I cannot find that in making wholesome meat out of controversy Perkins added any new doctrines to theology, he is in every respect a meticulously sound and orthodox Calvinist. What he did contribute was an energetic evangelical emphasis, he set out to arouse and inflame his hearers.”³ Thus, Miller finally conceded what many of his students must have found rather surprising. There is “an essential continuity between the New England theology and that of the Reformed, or as they are called, the Calvinistic churches. The federal theology was not a distinct or antipathetic system. It was simply an idiom in which these Protestants sought to make a bit more plausible the mysteries of the Protestant creed.”⁴

Calvin’s theology possesses inherent tensions, as it attempts to wrestle with the principal themes of Scripture. Unwilling to settle for reductionistic “solutions,” Calvin and both his peers and successors in the Reformed tradition attempt to face the difficulties of divine sovereignty and

human responsibility, the two natures of Christ, the Law and the Gospel. But it is left to the successors to provide a rationale for the answers that the reformers gave, especially in the face of critical arguments from Bolsec, Castellio, and Bellarmine, Continental controversies with Lutherans, and the rise of Arminian and Jesuit polemics. Nevertheless, the search for a “culprit” is very often the search for justification of one’s own position and in Miller’s case, Calvin himself was the problem and the federal theologians attempted to correct his deterministic tendencies.

He [Calvin] demanded that they contemplate, with steady, unblinking resolution, the absolute, incomprehensible, and transcendent sovereignty of God, he required men to stare fixedly and without relief into the very center of the blazing sun of glory. God is not to be understood but to be adored. This supreme and awful essence can never be delineated in such a way that He seems even momentarily to take on any shape, contour, or feature recognizable in the terms of human discourse, nor may His activities be subjected to the laws of human reason or natural plausibility.⁵

It is as if Miller had read only Book One of the *Institutes*. The inscrutable, mysterious, unknowable God of Calvin, or of Perry Miller’s Calvin, is also God the Redeemer, who is revealed to us in the person and work of Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis on divine transcendence is calculated to lend crisp clarity to the divine revelation in Christ and Scripture, so that the inquisitive and curious will not probe into the divine essence, but rather seek him as he has revealed himself. Luther’s *Deus nudus* is the inscrutable God of Calvin in Miller’s description, but like Luther, Calvin only insisted on the mysterious and unknowable God of natural theology in order to accent the supernatural revelation and salvation in Christ. Calvin, happily, did not direct his followers to “contemplate, with steady, unblinking resolution, the absolute, incomprehensible, and transcendent sovereignty of God” or require them “to stare fixedly and without relief into the very center of the blazing sun of glory,” as if to advance the

notion that “God is not to be understood but to be adored” It is precisely because of this blinding glory that the curious are in danger, Calvin argues, hardly encouraging the enterprise Thus, it is rather striking that Miller would make the following statement in the light of Books Two and Three of the *Institutes* “This supreme and awful essence can never be delineated in such a way that He seems even momentarily to take on any shape, contour, or feature recognizable in the terms of human discourse, nor may His activities be subjected to the laws of human reason or natural plausibility”⁶ After all, Calvin himself writes, “Since we have fallen from life into death, the whole knowledge of God the Creator that we have discussed would be useless unless faith also followed, setting forth for us God our Father in Christ”⁷ The “consuming fire” we encounter through natural revelation, which in turn hardens us in our ingratitude toward God because of our own sinfulness, is, in the revelation of Christ, made the believer’s Father Therefore, the believer must seek God in Christ, not in his essence⁸ Miller simply heard one half of Calvin’s story

As we have seen, Calvin’s warning against speculative climbing into divine mysteries is precisely the approach taken by the English Calvinists as well From Perkins to Goodwin, we see this emphasis on the economic Trinity, conspiring together in a Covenant of Redemption Far from placing a trinitarian and christocentric approach and a federal scheme in opposition, they should be seen as synonymous The point Calvin wishes to make by building so much on the theme of union with Christ the Mediator is precisely the intention of the federal scheme of Christ the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace But this is just where the discontinuity thesis objects But rather than pointing to Calvin as the “determinist” whose views necessitated the federal scheme in

order to soften the system (as in Miller), many scholars have argued rather recently that it is Calvin's successors who gradually exchanged the christocentric, exegetical, and trinitarian theology of grace for a legalistic system of *quid pro quo*

Among the chief architects of the discontinuity thesis, James B. Torrance figures prominently,⁹ as we have already seen. In Calvin, "Grace is expounded in trinitarian terms," and election is discussed not under the doctrine of God (Book One), but at the end of the discussion of everything involved in salvation (Book Three).¹⁰ Beza, however, made double predestination a major premise in his 1555 *Summa totius Christianismi* and began teaching the utterly foreign notion of limited atonement, according to this position.¹¹ Reflecting the mood of the day, with debates over rights and social contracts, federalism rushed in to provide a rationale for Beza's revision. Revealing an indebtedness to Miller's thesis, Torrance says of this federal motif, "Here is a way in which by the concept of *foedus* the harsher elements of a high doctrine of the decrees are mitigated," but instead of seeing this as a positive development, Torrance concludes, "By drawing this distinction between a 'covenant of nature' and a 'covenant of grace,' Reformed theology is clearly adopting a Western nature-grace model."¹² At last, what appears to be the agenda of many among the discontinuity proponents is made clear. Calvin is refashioned into Irenaeus or Clement, reflecting Torrance's own sympathy for the Eastern Fathers. In fact, he even states his interest in recovering "a more trinitarian incarnational model" that eschews the "legalism" of the nature-grace tradition in Western theology. "But perhaps we need therefore to interpret Calvin more in terms of his roots in the trinitarian, incarnational theology of the great Greek Fathers, Athanasius and the Cappadocian divines, and less in terms of the Latin Western Fathers--of Augustine and the Westminster divines."¹³ But since Augustine is clearly Calvin's most cited and

respected source, along with other Western fathers, such remarks strike one as special pleading. As a side here, it is clear from the *use* of the terms that “nature” is a poor choice and “works” is more appropriate. In the historical development of the covenant of works, the nature-grace paradigm is barely related even tangentially and although the phrase, “covenant of nature” (opposed to a “covenant of grace”) sounds like a classical medieval category, it is unrelated to that debate historically.¹⁴

There is a deeper agenda for many proponents of discontinuity. A Barthian emphasis on the incarnation--Torrance refers to a supposed emphasis in Calvin on the “vicarious humanity” of Christ in incarnational recapitulation, but not to a vicarious atonement--rather than on penal substitution becomes readily apparent.¹⁵ Augustine is perceived as a “legalist” who exchanges the parable of the prodigal son for the *lex taliones* of the courtroom.¹⁶ “Legalism” in this debate does not refer necessarily to the belief in salvation by law-keeping (which is its historical usage), but is now made the term of derision for a forensic view. It is impossible to read Calvin any more than the Puritans apart from an Augustinian soteriological paradigm. If it is too much to say that Calvin was a fully-developed federal theologian, it is certainly an opposite exaggeration to suggest that he adopted an Eastern incarnational model that is at odds with an Augustinian emphasis on the satisfaction of divine justice in the cross.

In spite of the motivation for this thesis, it cannot account for its own internal contradictions, much less for the variance with the sources themselves. First, like Kendall who followed his lead, Torrance is disturbed by federalism’s placement of Law before Gospel, deducing from this order that it gives “primacy to law over grace.”¹⁷ Surely this creates a dualism to which Calvin would strongly object, with natural law corresponding to creation and grace to redemption. And yet,

Calvin does seem to draw just such a contrast and unequivocally declares, "It is a fact that the law of God which we call the moral law is nothing else than a testimony of natural law" ¹⁸ But apart from that issue, the placement of Law before Gospel in the order of proclamation should not be confused with a temporal order, as no federal theologian would deny God's grace in creation and providence, as Torrance suggests ¹⁹ To Torrance, adopting Karl Barth's critique, the Law-Gospel order suggests a subordination of grace to law, since according to the federal view, the way in which we the elect are ultimately saved is by Christ fulfilling the Law (the Covenant of Works) in their place ²⁰ If God can only fully express his love and acceptance through the pacification of legal requirements, such a view requires a priority of law over grace, Torrance argues, with this objection "Propitiation, like the fulfilling of the law, is the work of grace, not the condition of grace--not the satisfying of the terms of a contract" ²¹ And yet, if propitiation (a work of grace) does not satisfy the terms of divine justice and righteousness (a motif expressed in Scripture by the terms "law," "justify," "condemn," "covenant," etc), who is propitiated? Propitiation itself, the satisfaction of just wrath, requires the notion of a divine will expressed in legal terms Although Torrance and many proponents of discontinuity argue that the federal theologians are responsible for the introduction of a "merit theology" in the notion of Christ's "active obedience" and fulfillment of a covenant of works, it is Calvin himself who spends an entire chapter in the *Institutes* defending the idea that Christ merited salvation on behalf of believers ²² Is the same idea as that conveyed by the covenant of works not implied in Calvin's words, "We cannot gainsay that the reward of eternal salvation awaits complete obedience to the law, as the Lord has promised" ²³ The question, says Calvin, is whether it is we who fulfill that obedience, or Christ In this matter, one does not find the Law gracious, since "horrible threats hang over us" and "pursue

us with inexorable harshness, so that we discern in the law only the most immediate death”²⁴

Furthermore, Torrance makes far too much out of the distinction between covenant and contract, for we have seen in the mainstream Puritan writers, especially Sibbes, Preston, Owen, and Goodwin, the repeated declaration that the covenant is better called a “testament,” underscoring its absolute and unconditional character.²⁵ What the critics do not seem to recognize is the nuanced distinction between absolute promises being the sole object of justifying faith, while conditional promises were allowed in the matter of axiomatic faith. Torrance appears to read statements from the Puritans in reference to the latter as if they rendered the entire covenant conditional. Not a single formative Puritan theologian we have studied surrounding Goodwin held that view--not even the New England elders, as their defenses against just that charge make plain.²⁶

What such arguments also fail to recognize is the distinction between conditions that God fulfills and conditions that are set before sinners. Does God have to be “conditioned into forgiveness,” as Torrance puts it? The Puritans are simply saying, with the reformers, Anselm, Augustine, and, it would seem, the Old and New Testaments, that sin is the cause of divine judgment upon all sinners and the cross is the divine condition for showing forgiveness. To say, therefore, that God himself satisfies the conditions of his own justice may still not be a satisfactory notion to Torrance, but it is surely not the same as saying that it places the covenant on a conditional basis for the believer. That is, after all, why federal theology distinguishes between the Mediator’s fulfillment of the covenant of works so that the elect could receive the fruit of his obedience via the covenant of grace.

Torrance repeatedly places in opposition motifs or schema that are not in the least antagonistic. For instance, in Calvin we see “the trinitarian nature of God set against any notion of a contract God who needs to be conditioned into being gracious”²⁷. As we have seen repeatedly, federalism is the epitome of a trinitarian scheme, with Christ the Mediator at the center. Union with Christ is not to be contrasted with the federal motif either, since it is, after all, union with Christ the Mediator (the Second Adam), and this representative union is the very essence of federalism. What is not present in federalism, nor in Calvin, is the emphasis of the Eastern Fathers on recapitulation, which Torrance seems to attribute to Calvin under the rubric “union with Christ”. Hence, when Torrance refers to Calvin’s “union with Christ” motif versus the later Calvinist’s federal motif, he gives the impression that the only available view of “union with Christ” happens to be the realistic rather than representative notion.

This is why one cannot help but be surprised by Torrance’s statement, “The federal scheme sees all under the sovereignty of God, but not under the mediatorial Headship of Christ as Man”²⁸. After all, what is covenant theology if not a system based on Christ the Mediator and his federal headship? We have seen how thoroughly committed the Puritans in general and Goodwin in particular were in defending the theanthropic christology in their discussions of Christ’s mediatorial work. One eventually comes to understand the author’s point, however, when “the mediatorial Headship of Christ as Man,” is understood as a universal recapitulation of humanity rather than a legal and representative mediatorial role exercised on behalf of the elect. The federal scheme “does not do justice to the Pauline teaching of Ephesians and Colossians, taken up in Irenaeus and the Greek Fathers, that God’s concern is to reconcile and sum up all things in Christ”²⁹. Torrance then continues to scold Western theology in general

Finally, Torrance discerns in this alleged shift from Calvin to Beza and his successors an entirely different concept of God. “We have to ask ourselves, therefore the question. In the movement from Calvin to federal Calvinism, do we not see a basic shift in the doctrine of God, from a prime emphasis on God as triune to a Stoic concept of God as primarily the Lawgiver, the contract God, or to an Aristotelian concept of God in whom there are no unrealized potentialities?”³⁰ In other words, divine immutability itself is now to be identified as a federalistic distinctive, owing more to Stoicism than to Scripture. And yet, as we have seen in our survey of the federal theologians, their scheme is always expressed in trinitarian terms. Indeed, that is so striking that one wonders how Torrance and those who sympathize with his thesis could possibly miss it. The Father electing, the Son redeeming, and the Holy Spirit applying redemption requires a trinitarian pattern and presentation and this is precisely what one finds on the continent and in England, as we have seen. Goodwin is a splendid example of this controlling trinitarian structure.

This thesis of discontinuity between Calvin and later Calvinism has nevertheless exercised enormous influence in recent studies. Charles M. Bell,³¹ Basil Hall,³² Alan Clifford,³³ Brian Armstrong,³⁴ and Holmes Rolston III³⁵ are among the most ardent advocates, and Tony Lane³⁶ and Peter Toon³⁷ are cautiously sympathetic to the position. R. T. Kendall’s concentrated defense of the thesis, however, has given it new life outside of Neo-orthodox circles. Kendall set out very clearly the points of alleged discontinuity: the decree (under the doctrine of God) replaces Christ at the center, leading to a metaphysical interest in probing the divine essence, Aristotelian scholasticism replaces Scriptural exegesis, the view of faith as intellectual and passive is exchanged for a voluntaristic and active view.³⁸ Limited atonement is deduced from the

federal system even though Calvin, according to Kendall, was clearly opposed to such a notion³⁹

As to the first premise, we have demonstrated that the placement of the decree in a given discussion does not have a necessarily theological implication, since Calvin discussed it under the doctrine of God in polemics and Beza discussed it under soteriology in his *Confessio*. Bullinger denied double predestination and yet emphasized a conditional covenant, and many other examples cited remind us of the dangers of reductionism, with key figures forced to line up on either side of Kendall's list of contrasting positions. We have seen how deeply christocentric character of the Puritans and federalism ensured that emphasis as a principle of organization, and we have seen how Goodwin and his predecessors were anxious to guard against metaphysical speculation concerning the divine essence. "Christ Set Forth" is the center of Goodwin's system. Even the *sylogismus practicus* was itself devised for the very purpose of avoiding metaphysical speculation.

As for the scholastic method, we have argued, with Richard Muller, that scholasticism, as employed by the Reformed successors, was a method and not a theology⁴⁰. Just as opposing parties might use the same rules of formal logic, those trained in Roman Catholic scholasticism simply moved the categories around and replaced what they believed to be flawed with that which they believed to be true, and when they found a particular category or method obscuring an otherwise perspicuous passage of Scripture, there was no slavish attachment to the method. Ironically, even Kendall, et al., must employ scholastic categories whenever they take issue with the Puritans, for instance, on the *ordo salutis*⁴¹. They do not reject all "orders," but rather argue the superiority of one over the other (viz., faith as antecedent to repentance). By employing the scholastic method, the Reformed orthodox (including the Puritans) erected an exegetically-

grounded, christocentric, federal system that attempted to answer the questions raised by the magisterial reformers

It is interesting that the proponents of discontinuity do not notice that their criticisms of federalism are very often criticisms of the Reformation itself, since the Law-Gospel hermeneutic forms the substance of the covenants of works and grace. This is made explicit in Ursinus's *Major Catechism* (1562), where the answer to the question, "What is the difference between the Law and the Gospel?" is as follows

The Law contains the covenant of nature initiated in creation by God with man, [and] requires perfect obedience to God, and it promises eternal life for those who keep it, and threatens eternal punishments for those who do not fulfill it. But the Gospel contains the covenant of grace, that is, existing but not known naturally; it shows to us the fulfillment in Christ of his justice, which the law requires, and its restoration in us through the Spirit of Christ; and it promises eternal life by grace because of Christ to those who believe in him.⁴²

In fact, Torrance observes, "This is federal theology in embryo."⁴³ And yet, it is almost identical to the definition of Law and Gospel one finds in the Lutheran confessions and both Calvin's *Institutes* and Beza's catechism.⁴⁴ These discussions were not limited to late sixteenth century Calvinism, although Reformed scholastics seemed the most enthusiastic about the scheme as a way of organizing a system around Christ the Mediator. But such emphases as the Law-Gospel and repentance-faith order are evidence of a departure from Calvin, then the magisterial Reformation itself was against Calvin. However, not only was Calvin a "Calvinist", if these emphases mark federalists, Luther and the Lutherans join the consensus. One of the greatest departures from the magisterial reformers actually turns out to be the hallmark of Luther's Reformation, and one wonders why Luther and his heirs are not similarly excoriated for their "legalism." It is this writer's contention that the scholars of the discontinuity thesis do not

sufficiently comprehend the nature or purpose of this pedagogical use of the Law for the magisterial reformers and their successors. The humiliation of the Law was not a penance or a period of penitential preparation that would merit eternal life, but was calculated to do just the opposite. By the preaching of the Law, those who might otherwise trust in their own merits would realize that they are incapable of the righteousness God requires and would therefore be led to flee to Christ for safety.

Concerning Kendall's suggestion that Calvin's view of faith as intellectual and passive was replaced by a voluntaristic and active view of faith, we demonstrated that (a) Calvin himself was unclear on the matter, locating the seat of the *actus fidei* sometimes in the understanding and at other times in the heart or will, and (b) that the same inconsistency can be seen in the Puritans themselves. In fact, although Goodwin regarded the seat as primarily the will, he insisted on defining faith as "merely passive," and "a mere receiving," distinguished from love, obedience, or repentance.⁴⁵ Goodwin criticizes the tendency to reduce faith to assent,⁴⁶ even though he locates the seat of the *actus fidei* in the will. But then Preston himself declared, "What is faith, but a laying hold of Christ? Now, the emptier the hand is, the further hold it takes: the more we are taken off ourselves, the further we shall cleave to Christ."⁴⁷ Furthermore, we have argued that Kendall has asked more of the distinction than the weight of his argument will bear, since the location of the *actus fidei* in the will does not keep writers like Perkins, Preston, and Goodwin from stressing that faith is merely receiving, not doing or giving something on its part. The connection between the seat of faith and the confusion of faith with other graces is simply not present in the sources.

But to suggest, as Kendall does, that the view that faith is a human act "comes quite close" to a justification by works,⁴⁸ is rather remarkable. Who among the classical theologians would have

denied that it was the subject who was believing? While Calvin insisted that it was the corruption of nature and not nature itself that was the problem, Kendall appears to employ a nearly Manichaean view of conversion that often marked seventeenth-century antinomian positions. In conversion, God “supplants nature with a new will and does this by effacing nature. God does not aid the will already in nature, He gives man a new will outside nature. It is not nature, or flesh, or the will that is merely ‘strengthened’, conversion means a new will altogether. Our natural will is abolished-- ‘effaced’”⁴⁹ That Kendall would attribute this view to Calvin is quite remarkable, as Helm observes in his citation of Calvin himself on this very point:

What takes place is wholly from God. I say that the will is effaced, not in so far as it is will, for in man’s conversion what belongs to his primal nature remains entire. I also say that it is created anew, not meaning that the will now begins to exist, but that it is changed from an evil to a good will.⁵⁰

As Helm expressed it, “It is almost as if Calvin had anticipated the very misinterpretation Kendall puts forward, and answered it ‘what belongs to his primal nature remains entire’”⁵¹ Finally, in response to the suggestion that Calvin adhered to a universal atonement, we demonstrated that the efficiency-sufficiency distinction, affirmed at Dort, was already present in medieval theology, especially of the *via Augustini*, and Calvin explicitly endorsed it.⁵²

Predestination

We have argued that the differences in emphasis, particularly with regard to predestination and assurance, are required not by a shift in theology, but a changing pastoral context. As surely as anxious souls might have wondered whether they had sufficient works, they were now wondering if they had true and saving faith. Therefore, a new anxiety replaced the old. When Calvin addressed the question of discovering one’s predestination, he held forth Christ as “the mirror of election”

and warned of a descent into a “labyrinth from which [one] will find no exit”⁵³ As Perry Miller put it, “This was sufficient for men of 1550, but men of 1600 wished to ascertain something more definite about their own predicament”⁵⁴

But the Puritans did not, for the most part, seek their predestination in metaphysics or in speculating about divine ontology, rather, they recognized the possibility of discerning causes from effects. Furthermore, most of the discussions of election (such as the one found in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms) cluster around the locus of Christ the Mediator, supporting Muller’s argument that interest in the decree was not at odds with an interest in Christ, but that it brought soteriology and christology together. Goodwin himself is evidence of this point: “And it was yet a greater condescension to ordain his eternal Son to dwell in human nature, and that nature to become one person with him, which was the fundamental decree of all, for we are chosen in Christ as in our head, Eph 1:3”⁵⁵ And yet, as Luther argued in *The Bondage of the Will*, so Goodwin uses election primarily as a buttress for the doctrine of justification, “which doctrine he would have ministers most frequent in, to affirm constantly, and to affirm with a special certainty and assurance.”⁵⁶

Even apart from limited atonement, belief in election or predestination at all tends to raise the question, “How can I know that God will be gracious to me?” The fact that this was raised not only by Bullinger and Calvin, as well as their successors, but also by Melancthon, as we have seen, points up the fact that the notion of a limited atonement does not introduce a new note of anxiety any more than belief in predestination itself. The importance of the *syllogismus practicus*, however, does demonstrate a growing emphasis on subjective assurance and the experience of conversion. As we have seen, Calvin will admit the fruit of faith in the matter of helping the believer experience assurance, but he will not allow it to be part of the foundation of assurance. This is required by his view of assurance as part of the essence of saving faith. After all, building

one's assurance on sanctification would be tantamount to justification by works if faith and assurance are identical. The Puritans, however, separated faith and assurance, allowing more room to signs of regeneration in assuring the believer. This distinction must be recognized every time one attempts to contrast Calvin with his disciples. When, for instance, Kendall argues that the difficult search for assurance is tantamount to salvation by works, he is failing to recognize the distinction, made clearly by the Puritans themselves⁵⁷ and by Goodwin even more emphatically, between faith and assurance. As I will argue below, even this difference between Calvin and the Puritans was not as significant as it is often urged, since in neither case was one affirming what the other denied (or vice versa).

Faith and Assurance

Among the fissures in the shift from Calvin to the English Calvinists, R. T. Kendall cites (1) the rise of voluntarism and activism and (2) the placement of repentance before faith.⁵⁸ And yet, as we have argued concerning the second proposition, terms were still fluid in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: regeneration sometimes referred to sanctification, at other times to the divine act of conversion or effectual calling. Similarly, repentance was sometimes referred to as a process of turning from sin and at other times the notion of despairing of oneself (otherwise regarded as the pedagogical work of the Law preceding the Gospel). In the latter usage, it would be quite natural for a Protestant to speak of repentance preceding faith. In fact, Calvin explains the sense in which repentance may be seen as a condition of forgiveness, and the sense in which it may not be seen as such.⁵⁹

Above, we referred to the variety of emphases one finds even in the same work concerning the seat of faith, for instance, where Calvin places it in the understanding, as Kendall suggests, but then he also argues that faith "is more of the heart than of the brain, and more of the disposition than of

the understanding”⁶⁰ Goodwin is no exception, although he does affirm the will as the primary seat, nevertheless, this hardly turns Goodwin into a proto-Arminian. This act of faith, seated in the will, is “simply a trust and believing on him,” nothing more.⁶¹ Similarly for Owen, faith is simple trust.⁶² Furthermore, Owen declares, “Faith is in the understanding.”⁶³ We have seen how, for Tyndale, Downname, Frith, Perkins and others, faith included assurance in some form, although the division between faith and assurance widens throughout the debates of the seventeenth century. To the question, “How doth a man apply Christ and all his benefits unto himself?”, Perkins replied, “This applying is done by assurance, when a man is verily persuaded by the Holy Spirit of God’s favour *towards himself particularly* and of the forgiveness of *his own sins*”⁶⁴ (emphasis added). And yet, the least measure of faith is “when a man of an humble spirit doth not yet feel the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins and yet is persuaded that they are pardonable.”⁶⁵ William Ames wrote, “That faith is properly called justifying by which we rely upon Christ for the remission of sins and salvation. Faith justifies only by apprehending the righteousness by which we are justified. That righteousness does not lie in the truth of some proposition to which we give assent, but in Christ alone *Who has been made sin for us that we might be righteousness in him*, 2 Cor. 5:21.”⁶⁶ So much for Ames’s allegedly critical role in the shift from faith as a matter of the understanding to *assensus* and voluntarism. And then this pivotal divine defined the relationship of faith and assurance.

Therefore, justifying faith is not wrongly described as persuasion by the orthodox (as it often is)--especially when they take a stand against the general faith to which the papists ascribe everything. But the following should be considered. First, the feeling of persuasion is not always present. It may and often does happen, either through weakness of judgment or various temptations and troubles of mind, that a person who truly believes and is by faith justified before God may for a time think that he neither believes nor is reconciled to God. Second, there are many degrees in this persuasion,

unlike justifying faith itself.⁶⁷ Therefore, like Perkins (and like Calvin), Ames distinguished between the persuasion or assurance that one is reconciled to God (which is always part of faith)

and the experience of that assurance (which is not always present) He explicitly affirms the orthodox (i.e., the view held by Luther, Calvin, Ursinus and the Reformed scholastics) view of assurance (persuasion) as part of the essence of faith, and insists that the only point he and the Puritans wish to make is that this existential awareness is not always present--a point with which Calvin, as we have seen, clearly agreed

Even in the Savoy Declaration, we see both Owen and Goodwin defining faith as “a gracious resting upon the free promises of God in Jesus Christ for mercy, with a *firm persuasion of heart* that God is a reconciled Father *unto us* in the Son of his love” (emphasis added) In fact, Goodwin writes elsewhere that in true faith one is “persuaded of Christ’s readiness to save sinners, with some secret intimation that there is mercy *for himself*, though a sinner”⁶⁸ When the Puritans increasingly deny assurance as part of the essence of faith, it becomes clearer that their intention is the experience or comfort of assurance or what they call “full assurance,” which is not only not what Calvin had in mind, but was explicitly rejected as belonging to every believer⁶⁹

Therefore, the significance of the debate of faith and assurance ought to be more modestly assessed and differences between parties (or internal self-contradictions) that were not extrapolated by the authors themselves should not be forced upon them anachronistically Often, the Puritans grant that persuasion is part of faith and that it even involves persuasion of divine favor toward oneself What they are anxious to maintain is that one must not conclude from a lack of an experience of assurance the absence of true, saving faith At the same time, Calvin never argued that this persuasion of God’s favor toward oneself was full or complete Thus, we come to the place where differences may be discerned, but only in emphasis Both Calvin and the Puritans agree that (a) works cannot form a foundation for assurance, but (b) they can assist in comforting and strengthening the same Once those two premises are acknowledged by both parties, the differences become, not insignificant, but far less significant, than suggested by Kendall, Torrance,

and other scholars. The Puritans not only believed, with Calvin, in the legitimacy of sanctification in encouraging the believer's assurance, they spent a great deal of time and energy exploring that relationship. While this is not an emphasis to be found in the Genevan reformer, the seeds may have been sown by and the ideas may be consistent with Calvin.

The very fact that Goodwin calls assurance "axiomatic *faith*" or "reflex *faith*" demonstrates that he does believe that assurance is part of faith's essence, it is simply that it is proper to faith's second rather than its first exercise. Not only can a believer have assurance, according to Goodwin, a believer should grow in it daily by degrees, just as in other graces. And for most Christians, it follows the first act of faith--perhaps after tremendous struggle, and for some, it comes the very first day. Therefore, in order for there to be a doctrinal difference, Calvin would have to exclude the possibility of doubt and the need to grow in assurance and Goodwin would have to exclude the possibility of faith possessing any quality of *fiducia*. Neither theologian requires such exclusions and when Calvin concedes that the believer is always in this life full of doubts and assailed by the devil's threatenings against such assurance, he is excluding the possibility that *full* assurance is necessarily a part of the definition of faith itself. It is precisely this "full assurance" that the Puritans had in mind when excluding assurance from the essence of saving faith.

Even the *sylogismus practicus* is not, in principal, rejected by Calvin, as long as evidences are not allowed to be used in the foundation for assurance.⁷⁰ But those are the same terms to which Owen was committed in his criticism of the Arminian John Goodwin, the latter daring to build assurance on the foundation of "upright walking," without which one's "comfort and consolation is thought to vanish. But that the Scripture builds up our assurance on other foundations is evident," says Owen, especially since temporary believers can often mimick the effects of justifying faith.⁷¹

Having said all of this, there are rather important pastoral implications of this subtle shift in

emphasis. Although Calvin did not deny the weak experience of many believers, he did stress the assuring character of faith. Because assurance belonged to every believer objectively, one need not build two separate criteria for establishing the first and reflex acts of faith, the former based on “Christ set forth” and the second determined by empirical sanctification. Therefore, although Calvin does not deny the place of works in assurance if taken *a posteriori* (a proposition to which the Puritans would heartily assent) and not used as a foundation, he is not terribly interested in discerning particular election through the effects of regenerating grace. This is a decidedly Puritan emphasis that derives from the stress on the experience of assurance as separate from the *actus fidei*. Because faith and assurance are practically synonymous for Calvin, the suggestion that one may discern assurance from works was tantamount to saying that Christ was not the object of saving faith. Goodwin was struggling with precisely the same question, as Puritanism itself seemed to him to be susceptible to a new legalism, but Goodwin’s resolution is very different from Calvin’s. Instead of making faith and assurance one and the same, thereby ruling out practical tests, Goodwin separates faith and assurance even more radically than his predecessors and emphasizes the passive, receptive nature of saving faith in its first act. Thus, any “gathering” or assurance from evidences is removed to the believer’s experience, not to the reality of justification.

We have seen Goodwin’s concerns in this regard with the opening to his work, *Christ Set Forth*, in which he complained that many who look to Christ alone for their justification nevertheless turn inward again and their Christian life begins to turn on what is happening in their hearts or actions. However, can we not ask Goodwin whether this dangerous pattern is itself created by the distinction between faith and assurance? Are we not on safer ground with Calvin at this point? While the approach we have taken in this thesis is to see the agreement between Calvin and the Calvinists on assurance as part of faith’s essence, Paul Helm has skillfully argued instead that Calvin accepted this distinction later identified with Puritanism. Helm recognizes that Calvin

clearly taught that a certainty of God's graciousness *to me* in Christ was part of his definition of faith itself. But he believes that Calvin was inconsistent, since he also held that the believer is assailed by doubts throughout his or her life. Helm's resolution is to suggest that, for Calvin, assurance was necessary in order for faith to flourish, but not essential to its very existence.⁷²

This argument fails for a number of reasons. First, like the Kendall thesis itself, it is somewhat anachronistic in reading the categories of seventeenth-century scholastic debate into the Reformation itself. Second, if the argument we have made for the agreement between Calvin and the earlier Puritans stands, it is not the case that Calvin takes the position of the later Puritans in separating faith and assurance, but that the earlier Puritans follow Calvin in viewing faith as "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence to us."⁷³ Calvin was not inconsistent on this point, for the existence of assurance depends upon the promise, not upon the evidences of grace. But the believer's daily experience of this assurance may be weaker in one moment than in another. This, of course, is not a line of thought that would have been mystifying to a Puritan himself, who was used to saying that the *root* of sanctification is in every believer even though the *fruit* may be more or less plentiful than other believers, or than other points in one's own Christian life. But the root is there, and if that is affirmed by the earlier Puritans (as well as some of the later ones), they are in agreement with Calvin on this point. If the earlier Puritans show more affinity with the position of Calvin and Heidelberg, so too do the divines of the late Elizabethan period. The staunchly Calvinistic Lambeth Articles stated, "A man truly faithful, that is, such a one who is endued with justifying faith, is certain, with the full assurance of faith, of the remission of his sins and of his everlasting salvation by Christ." Goodwin, however, was not in agreement with these views, however Calvinistic, and, in fact, wrongly assumed that Lutherans alone affirmed assurance as part of faith's essence.⁷⁴

In fact, Goodwin's assumption notwithstanding, most Puritan divines and orthodox continental divines knew that there were two distinct views on faith and assurance at the time of the

Westminster Assembly There, the Puritan divines declared, "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it" ⁷⁵ This was in contrast to the Heidelberg Catechism's answer, which every Puritan had memorized from university days "What is true faith? It is not only a certain knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his Word, but also a hearty trust which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits" ⁷⁶ Although we have argued throughout this study that the case for discontinuity is based on exaggerations and misunderstandings--even on the point of faith and assurance--there is little doubt that such a difference does lead to rather divergent trends Although Owen and Goodwin emphasize the difference between faith and assurance in order to protect the unconditionality of faith's promise, most of those who emphasized this distinction were prone to the conditional emphasis

Only forty years after Goodwin's death, the Marrow-men would argue against legalistic tendencies within the Scottish Kirk by attempting to read the Westminster Standards in a Calvinian-Heidelberg manner ⁷⁷ They were accused in 1720 of violating the Confession by teaching that assurance is part of faith's essence But the Confession itself is somewhat ambiguous on the point, declaring that "This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong, may be often and many ways assailed and weakened, but gets the victory, *growing up in many to the attainment of full assurance* through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith" ⁷⁸ As Louis Berkhof expressed it, "How can faith grow into this full assurance, if assurance is not, in any sense, of the essence of faith?" ⁷⁹

The distinction between faith and assurance does not have to lead to an introspective pattern of doubting, but it often has--especially when the emphasis in the preaching tended to fall on duties

and the threats of the Law toward those who erroneously thought they were truly converted. Joseph Alleine, a student of Goodwin's, preached to his congregation, "Surely, if the way be so easy as many suppose, that little more is necessary than to be baptized and to cry out, 'Lord, have mercy,' we need not put ourselves to such seeking, and knocking, and wrestling, as the Word requires in order to salvation."⁸⁰ In fact, "In a word, if you are not a holy, strict, and self-denying Christian, you cannot be saved."⁸¹ And yet, "you must by no means despair of finding mercy *upon your thorough repentance and conversion*" (emphasis added).⁸² Who would not be thrown into doubt and perhaps even despair under such confusion of the Law and the Gospel? Kendall and other critics do, we think, find a certain conditional, legalistic strain in some Puritan preachers. But so too did Owen, Goodwin, and other Puritans themselves whose criticisms of these tendencies we have explored in detail. Unlike both Kendall and Helm in the current debates, or Goodwin himself, we are inclined to conclude that this has more to do with the separation of faith and assurance than any other single factor. Fight as he may against the effects, Goodwin cannot sufficiently explain how the separation of assurance from faith does not lead to anxiety and despair. However, Goodwin's emphasis on the separation of faith and assurance was motivated by the same practical and pastoral concerns that motivated Calvin to unite them—to ensure an utterly gracious promise from God in Christ as the sole foundation for saving faith.

The universal offer of the Gospel is not in the least impeded by federal theology in general or limited atonement in particular. In fact, one is impressed throughout Goodwin's works with the extent to which he is motivated by the notion that Christ must be objectively set forth before the eyes of all. The New Testament invitations are general, Goodwin argues, and therefore, sufficient for the exercise of justifying faith even if one cannot conclude one's own election. If Kendall can conclude--and here we agree that he can--that an introspective search for personal election became a practical Puritan distinctive, it is not to be attributed to federalism's insistence upon limited

atonement, but to the division between faith and assurance, with the rather extreme activism and anxious searching that some Puritan writings make essential to the attainment of assurance

In spite of Goodwin's clarity on "Christ set forth," he is confusing (as are many of the Puritans) on the exact relationship of faith and assurance, saying on one hand that this faith-union "lies not primarily in believing Christ is mine," but in resting in Christ and cleaving to him as the fountain of life⁸³ One wonders why, if in principle he was opposed to the role given to "conditional promises" and the *sylogismus practicus*, Goodwin did not simply adopt Calvin's emphasis on the unity of faith and assurance, rather than further distinguishing these as separate acts of faith Federal theology did not require this distinction (viz, in the Heidelberg tradition), but perhaps Goodwin was simply too committed to the tradition of the "spiritual brotherhood" to see how the question could be solved in this way It is more likely, however, that the Independent divine was convinced that Calvin's argument was essentially circular, and therefore, the believer would be turned back on himself or herself eventually unless faith and assurance were clearly distinguished Goodwin himself does not seem to answer this question for us

Finally, we discussed the emphasis on temporary faith and instead of viewing it as a means of turning faith into a work and a difficult work at that, we demonstrated how this discussion arose as a reaction to moralism By underscoring how easily the reprobate may feign true faith, many Puritans had their sights set on the proponents of a civil righteousness and a mere legal repentance Although Torrance, Rolston, and many others who wish to set Calvin not only against his successors but his predecessors in the Western (Augustinian) line, assert that Calvin reverses Luther's Law-Gospel order to underscore the belief that grace is involved with everything, including creation and the Law, Calvin himself demurs "We will never seriously apply to God for pardon until we have obtained such a view of our sins as inspires us with fear"⁸⁴ To be sure, the indicative precedes the imperative *for the believer* (otherwise, the covenant of grace would be turned into a

covenant of works), but the order must be reverse *for the unbeliever*. Before the Gospel can be appreciated, the Law must drive the sinner to despair of attaining divine favor by merit. Surely, God's grace does precede human activity (and it is impossible to interpret the Puritans as saying otherwise) in the *ordo salutis*, but this should not be confused with the order in which one is confronted with the Word itself. Law, followed by Gospel.

It should also be noted that Calvin employs the term "Law" in two senses: the Old Testament revelation (i.e., the church in its shadowy infancy), which forms much of his important discussion in the *Institutes*.⁸⁵ Old Testament saints "were endowed with the same Spirit of faith as we," and their sharing in Christ no more "arose from the law" than our own.⁸⁶ "But when through the law the patriarchs felt themselves both oppressed by their enslaved condition, and wearied by anxiety of conscience, they fled for refuge to the gospel."⁸⁷ So Calvin is impatient with those who would set Law against Gospel in antithesis if that should imply Old versus New Testament. Nevertheless, there is the second use Calvin makes of the "Law" and "Gospel" terminology, as one of the two categories for biblical revelation in both testaments as is plain in his famous and lengthy discussion of justification, where the "righteousness of faith" and the "righteousness of the Law" are set in a dialectic every bit as antithetical as the Lutheran doctrine.⁸⁸ "Let us also, to begin with, show that faith righteousness so differs from works righteousness that when one is established the other has to be overthrown," he writes.⁸⁹ Opponents of the forensic doctrine of justification "do not observe that in the contrast between the righteousness of the law and of the gospel, which Paul elsewhere introduces, all works are excluded, whatever title may grace them. For he teaches that this is the righteousness of the law, that he who has fulfilled what the law commands should obtain salvation, but this is a righteousness of faith, to believe that Christ died and rose again."⁹⁰ Thus, when used of the unfolding of redemptive history, the Law is the shadowy representation of the covenant of grace and in the Gospel the promises are fulfilled in Christ. But when used of justification, the Law is everything in the Word that promises upon the condition of perfect

obedience and threatens for all transgressions, and the Gospel is everything in the Word that promises unconditionally and makes no threats. Thus, in commenting on the fear of the Israelites at Mount Sinai (Hebrews 12:19), Calvin observes, "In this second clause he shows that the Law was very different from the Gospel because it was full of all kinds of terrors when it was proclaimed."⁹¹ It "condemned to eternal death," but if it is received in faith, "the Gospel contains only love."⁹²

Likewise, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 3:7, Calvin contrasts the ministry of Moses and that of Christ in this latter sense of "Law" and "Gospel." "From this it follows that the law was a ministry of death," surely not referring to the whole of the Old Testament, but to this category that relates to justification.⁹³ "Thus from the Law they receive nothing but this condemnation, for there God demands what is due to him, and yet gives no power to perform it. But by the Gospel men are regenerated and reconciled to God by the free remission of sins, so that it is the ministration of righteousness and life."⁹⁴ Romans 4:15 teaches, according to the reformer, that "since the law produces nothing but vengeance, it cannot bring grace."⁹⁵ Only the context can identify which use Calvin intends, as here he is surely not referring to the Old Testament generally, but to the "Law" as a category in both testaments. As we have seen, Ursinus, in his *Major Catechism*, is the first to explicitly relate this very categorical use of "Law" and "Gospel" to "Covenant of Works" and "Covenant of Grace."⁹⁶ Thus, Calvin's continuity with federal theology is upheld and it is the proponents of the discontinuity thesis who stand in opposition not only to the federal theologians, but to Calvin, and not only to Calvin, but to the entire Reformation consensus.

This explains how Calvin can speak both of harmony of the Law and the Gospel (according to the former sense) and the antithesis of the two in the point of justification, without contradicting himself. Nevertheless, Torrance and Kendall read these passages from Calvin and conclude that

the reformer's appreciation for the revelation of the Gospel and divine graciousness even before Christ and indeed before the giving of the Law at Sinai excludes the view that the preaching of the Law (or the existence of a covenant of works in creation) precedes the preaching of the Gospel in conversion. As we have seen, Calvin hardly collapses redemption into creation and the Gospel into the Law in this manner.

The Puritans, including Goodwin, exhibit this same willingness to use "Law" and "Gospel" in these two different senses--sometimes referring to the progress of redemption, and other times pulling together all of Scripture in both testaments under the distinct heading of "Law" and "Gospel," and we have seen the precedent for this in Beza's catechism.⁹⁷ When used in the former sense, it is obvious that grace is revealed in the "Law" and that the two are not in opposition, since the covenant of grace is revealed in the Old as well as New Testament. But in the point of justification, the Law and Gospel are antithetical and this antithesis takes the form of the "covenant of works" and the "covenant of grace."

In both senses, however, the Law prepares the way for the Gospel, as the Old Testament (promise) points the way forward to the New (fulfillment), and the condemnation due for transgressing the divine commands, contained in both testaments, leads the humbled sinner to Christ for mercy, also revealed in both testaments. It is not when the Puritans are clearest in their explication of this Law-Gospel hermeneutic, the precedence of repentance before faith, and the contrast between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, that they are most likely to fall into legalism. It is precisely these themes that were exploited, in fact, by the antinomians.⁹⁸ One does, however, begin to detect Law-Gospel confusion and a consequent tendency toward legalism in some of the Puritan expositions of Scripture, especially when the evidences of grace are confused with the Gospel itself--a tendency Goodwin deplored, as we have seen. And that brings us to the concluding considerations of preparationism.

Preparationism

Perhaps no one has been more influential in reconstructing the Puritan idea of preparation than Perry Miller. However, Miller misunderstood the character of Puritan preparationism by failing to properly recognize the distinction between nature and grace. For instance, when he suggests that the encouragement to “prepare” for Christ by “Law-work” was palliative because “it lessened the area of human inability,”⁹⁹ he fails to observe that this work of humiliation was not considered identical to conversion or regeneration, but antecedent to it. Any unregenerate person could make use of the ordinary means, but apart from regeneration and union with Christ, the individual is spiritually helpless. By encouraging the unregenerate to use appropriate means (the Word, prayer, conversation, etc.), the Puritans were doing no more than encouraging them to bring themselves physically into the realm of divine activity through Word and Spirit within the covenant community. Far from lessening the area of human inability, this preparatory “humiliation” drove the self-righteous and self-confident to despair until they, if effectually called, finally repudiated their pretensions to righteousness and strength. Therefore, preparationism had the opposite intention than that ascribed to it by Miller. Ever since Miller, however, “preparationism” has been similarly confused with regeneration, and Kendall is among those who fail to distinguish between the natural use of ordinary means and supernatural conversion.

As we have seen, the Puritan “Law-work” that preceded the proclamation of the Gospel was nothing new in Protestantism, as it was the principal hermeneutic of the Reformation itself. To be sure, there is a more existential and psychological description and prescription for such humiliation, but fear of God on account of our sins precedes our acceptance of divine forgiveness, as Calvin also insisted. Preparation for the Puritans was not in the category of “Gospel”--that is, it was not a process of attaining right-standing with God. Rather, it was “Law”--the crushing of the

sinner's hopes so that he or she would *not* seek salvation through self-effort

Calvin and the other reformers made precisely the same use of the Law, although they did not attach any particular period of "preparation" and, in fact, Calvin argued that in some cases in which the sinner is already sufficiently convicted of being helpless, the Gospel is all that is needed¹⁰⁰ The "chief point" in the knowledge of ourselves is the result of the pedagogical use of the Law, leading us to Christ, "broken and crushed by the awareness of our own utter poverty" "Both of these the Lord accomplishes in his Law," Calvin observes¹⁰¹ Furthermore,

First, by comparing the righteousness of the law with our life, we learn how far we are from conforming to God's will And for this reason we are unworthy to hold our place among his creatures--still less to be accounted his children Secondly, in considering our powers, we learn that they are not only too weak to fulfill the law, but utterly nonexistent From this necessarily follows mistrust of our own virtue, then anxiety and trepidation of mind For the conscience cannot bear the weight of iniquity without soon coming before God's judgment Thus it finally comes to pass that man, thoroughly frightened by the awareness of eternal death, which he sees as justly threatening him because of his own unrighteousness, betakes himself to God's mercy alone, as the only haven of safety Thus, realizing that he does not possess the ability to pay to the law what he owes, and despairing in himself, he is moved to seek and await help from another quarter¹⁰²

Thus, it cannot be denied that Calvin, like his successors, believed that the work of the Law preceded the work of the Gospel--the announcement of judgment before the announcement of justification¹⁰³ It is only after a person has embraced the Gospel, then, that the indicative must precede every imperative "Perhaps some have been deceived by the fact that many are overwhelmed by qualms of conscience or compelled to obedience before they are imbued with the knowledge of grace, nay, even taste it"¹⁰⁴ In other words, the third (moral) use of the law is only acknowledged of a person after he or she has been converted, but the pedagogical use of the Law does not guide in righteousness it condemns and leaves the sinner in despair The moral use

follows conversion, as the imperative follows the indicative, nevertheless, the pedagogical use precedes the proclamation of the Gospel itself

Calvin was especially concerned in these remarks to critique the Anabaptist tendency of replacing New Testament evangelical repentance with a form of penance, when they “prescribe to their new converts certain days during which they must practice penance, and when these at length are over, admit them into communion of the grace of the gospel I am speaking of very many of the Anabaptists, especially those who marvelously exult in being considered spiritual, and of their companions, the Jesuits, and like dregs”¹⁰⁵

But the Puritan “preparationism” was intended to take the form of the pedagogical rather than moral use of the Law. It was, in other words, to drive one to the Gospel, not make one worthy of receiving it by the merit of having fulfilled certain conditions. As being destitute of saving oneself by self-righteousness is a necessary condition to forgiveness, so “preparation” (if limited to this role) may be considered not only prior to but a condition of faith--not conditional in the sense of that which one must perform in order to receive grace, but of that which must crush one’s hopes of entering the promise by one’s own righteousness. Thus the position described by Kendall and Torrance tends to confuse conditionality with merit, as if the former requires the latter. However, just as hearing the preached Word is a necessary, though not meritorious, condition of regeneration, so the conviction that results from the Law is necessary.

Of course, “preparation” could also become a form of penance, as Calvin here describes, in which people struggling for assurance mistake that as the struggle for faith itself and therefore spend their Christian lives trying to become regenerate by “preparation.” This latter condition

seems to be somewhat apparent even among some Puritans by Goodwin's day, as preparation increasingly (at least in practice) became associated with the moral life of the regenerate rather than with the function of driving the unregenerate to self-despair. Preparation had clearly become an end in itself for many, as they began to gain their comfort more from the degree to which they had experienced despair and self-loathing rather than from Christ and divine forgiveness. Thus, salvation lies not in being thirsty, but in coming to Christ for living water, Goodwin repeats in several places. Like Owen, then, Goodwin anticipates the Antinomian Controversy in New England and the troubles that will erupt in England as well. It is probably against such remarks as the following by Thomas Hooker that Goodwin rebels: "There must be contrition and humiliation before the Lord comes to take possession, the house must be aired and fitted before it comes to be inhabited, swept by brokenness and emptiness of spirit, before the Lord will come to set up his abode in it."¹⁰⁶ When one reads that one must be broken and empty of all hope in self before the Gospel benediction can be received, that is simply following the classical Protestant pattern. However, Hooker's language is somewhat confusing here. Beyond contrition and humiliation, "the house must be aired and fitted before it comes to be inhabited."¹⁰⁷ What does this mean? It sounds as if here the Law is not only doing a negative work (driving the sinner to despair), but a positive work as well (getting the house in order). Notice, however, what Hooker is not saying. Hooker is not arguing that before the Lord can take possession, the sinner must clean the house and make certain that it is suitable for its guest, placing the imperative before the indicative. The condition that is required for his entrance is "contrition and humiliation," to be "swept by brokenness and emptiness of spirit." Goodwin was not opposed to this--for, as we have seen, it is

an important prelude to the new birth. What he was opposed to, however, was the growing tendency to rest not in Christ but in the degree of one's despair. By emphasizing "Law-work," it was increasingly easy to expand the role of such a preparation beyond the Protestant "pedagogical use" of the Law, and to confuse the Law and the Gospel by confusing contrition and humiliation with trust and resting in Christ.

Against the notion expressed by John Cotton before his sympathetic relationship with Anne Hutchinson that "The Spirit will not lodge in an unclean heart,"¹⁰⁸ Goodwin replies, "Like the wind," the Holy Spirit "comes upon men without preparation and then works all."¹⁰⁹ He comes "immediately upon us, as we are in our natural condition, in our uncleanness and pollution, without any preparation to make way for his coming upon or into us."¹¹⁰ We have seen how Goodwin, though denying the antinomian view that justification precedes faith, argued that union with Christ did precede faith, leading to faith and justification.

Leaving no question as to his target, Goodwin writes, "Mr Bulkely, in that New-England controversy, seems to be an opposer of this opinion, that absolute promises are the means and primary object of full assurance of faith, through an immediate testimony of the Spirit, without conditional promises."¹¹¹ Goodwin recognizes that Bulkely, in making "a trial of our estates" by the practical syllogism, nevertheless made absolute promises alone the object of justifying faith. But Goodwin, as we have seen, is confusing here. After all, he himself employs practical arguments and warns against the sins that may evacuate assurance in terms of the most "conditional" Puritan. That is precisely why he distinguished faith from assurance, just as Bulkely had. Perhaps it was this very emphasis against which Goodwin reacted, since he concludes his remarks concerning the New England divine, "And though I do not wholly fall in with this latter

part of his conclusion,” referring to the relation of axiomatic faith to conditional promises, “ yet with the former part, that absolute promises are suited and fitted unto faith of adherence, or of the act of justifying faith, properly and truly such, I fully close with ”¹¹³ Unlike Cotton, or those who advance the discontinuity thesis, Goodwin did not accuse Bulkely or the elders of basing justifying faith on conditional promises, but like Cotton he was reticent to even see assurance seek out conditional promises. This created a tension--indeed, a contradiction, in Goodwin’s own thought, as he tried to reconcile his determined opposition to making conditions the object of even reflexive faith with his acceptance and employment of the *sylogismus practicus* and earnest warnings against failing to do that which will lead to assurance. The *sylogismus mysticus* became a way of harmonizing this contradiction--a “sylogism” (which, we have seen, does not really have the properties of a syllogism) that circumvents empirical verification by an inward and direct testimony of the Spirit. Here we must be careful not to either conclude that because of this Goodwin was a mystic or an enthusiastic antinomian (after all, did Calvin not also place more weight on the internal testimony than on a practical syllogism?) or that Goodwin is siding with Cotton in the nature-grace debate.

As a high Calvinist, Goodwin employs the federal theology in the service of setting Christ forth, by emphasizing the absolute and unconditional side of the bi-polar covenant, almost to the point of declining to regard faith itself as the “condition” of the covenant. However, Goodwin was not an antinomian, as some have argued. Had he been open to that charge in his own day, it is unlikely that he, though an Independent (and “the great disturber of the Assembly” for ecclesiological issues), would have been asked by the Assembly to serve on a committee “to compare the opinions of the Antinomians with the word of God, and with the Articles of Religion and make report to this Assembly ”¹¹³ Antinomianism, at least in London, was

attributed to the Independents by most Westminster divines, so their confidence in Goodwin's orthodoxy on this point must have been tested rather strictly

With this in mind, Goodwin explains why faith is so difficult. Proponents of the discontinuity thesis might point to this as an example of how the Puritans turn faith itself into a human work if they can, but Goodwin's purpose becomes quite clear. Faith is not difficult because of its demands. Rather, it is difficult (indeed impossible) because of bondage to sin. Faith is difficult because of its excellence, and human self-righteousness, human beings simply do not want to believe that they are helpless sinners.¹¹⁴ Faith is contrary to natural reason, conscience, and will, so there is no faculty that is capable of rendering necessary obedience to God that would satisfy justice. Faith, therefore, is difficult because of its obstacles, not because of anything inherent in it as an act. For as an act, it is merely a "fleeing to Christ" for refuge, as murderers were instructed to flee to the cities of refuge in the Old Testament. Faith is not knowing or experiencing safety, but fleeing to Christ *for* safety, and Goodwin cites Calvin for support of this distinction.¹¹⁵ Goodwin's point is simply that faith "doth not necessarily imply fulness of assurance."¹¹⁶ In fact, both faith and assurance "are (though in greater and lesser degree) common unto all believers."¹¹⁷ And yet the Independent divine is jealous to guard faith from being confused with its effects, including the experience of assurance or repentance.¹¹⁸ Preparation, therefore, is predicated on the obstacles to faith in those not sufficiently convinced of their need, but it is a dangerous occupation in his days, as he observes in the pastoral practice he so much laments.

Missing from Goodwin is the Puritan penchant for casuistry or "cases of conscience." In fact, Goodwin was suspicious of the conscience, declaring, "Conscience, at best, is but a legal preacher."¹¹⁹ It is useful in Law-work, convincing the sinner of his or her unrighteousness, but it

cannot acquit or reconcile. Although he does not entertain the openness to enthusiasm that John Cotton evidenced, Goodwin's antipathy toward what he perceives as an excessive emphasis on ordinary means and preparation encourages him to turn at times in a rather mystical direction. No casuistry, nor syllogistic reasoning through evidences in the "golden chaine,"--no preparations--will bring assurance like the divine "whisper," and the sealing of the Spirit does not refer to conversion, but rather to assurance. It is an experience of assurance that is like "a new conversion."¹²⁰ The *sylogismus mysticus* superior to the *sylogismus practicus*.

There are other motives and persuasives that have done victoriously, but this [prayer as the Holy Spirit's direct leading into love of God] excels them all. As I use to say of that way of living by faith immediately, in comparison of poring upon graces in ourselves, and importing assurance therefrom, that this latter is rather a going about, and fetching a compass with a great deal of difficulty and uncertainty, but that other way of faith is as the north-east passage to the Indies, the shortest and speediest way of comforting and upholding the heart when found out. It is the heart, and not the understanding (for this love passeth knowledge).

And I having upon occasion of handling the greatness of this love (on Eph 11 6), viewed all that I could find in the Scripture to set out the greatness of this love by, found little to what might have been expected, to exaggerate and greaten a subject of that magnitude this is of. I resolved the reason of it into this, that it is left to the Spirit to make an immediate report of this love by impressions of it, rather than by notions, or rational arguments, or inferences. It is left to him to speak that to the heart which can be but whispered unto the mind. It is too big for words, and too glorious to be clothed with man's apprehensions, much less expressions, and it is fit only to speak itself, and that may be a reason also, why we find so little of rational inducements drawn from this eternal love to enforce obedience. I have given you all I could find in the New Testament. I attribute it to this, that this love spoken by the Spirit to the heart persuades to it without any more arguments, and will not take in the assistance of reason, or notions, or inferences to urge the commands of itself, but will itself do it, and doth it abundantly.¹²¹

It is precisely this matter of the practical versus the mystical syllogism that erupts in the New England controversy, and Goodwin must clearly have been on the side of Cotton in certain important respects. Although, unlike his esteemed elder, he eschewed enthusiasm, upheld the union of Word and Spirit, and accepted the use of ordinary means (including the practical syllogism), Goodwin nevertheless shows signs of having drunk deeply from the well of Platonism, which was now becoming increasingly associated with Cambridge University in particular.¹²² In most

instances, the influence appears limited to images and metaphors for more illustrative exegesis, but in others (such as the interpretation of the *sylogismus mysticus*), the debt appears greater

Here the question raised by Paul E. G. Cook comes into play: Was Thomas Goodwin a mystic?¹²³ We have seen how the Puritan emphasis on the subjective experience of the individual believer differs from the objective focus of the magisterial Reformers. The separation of faith and assurance was bound to lead to serious spiritual crises when the struggling believer was directed to inner experience and mystical intuition. Goodwin explicitly rejected the Quaker view of the “inner light.”¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the content and influence of his most popular work, *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth* (1645), raises some important questions. Published in German and widely read on the continent,¹²⁵ this treatise has even been credited with having been “the most formative factor in the development and popularization of the highly mystical Roman Catholic devotion of the Sacred Heart.”¹²⁶ According to Cook, this influence has been suggested by Dr. W. Robertson Nichol, in the *British Weekly* of June 9, 1898, in a lengthy article in the *Edinburgh Review* of January, 1874, and Cook himself is satisfied with the arguments.¹²⁷

However, Cook is convinced that the devotion to the physical heart of Christ is a woodenly literal interpretation of Goodwin’s treatise, where the heart of Christ is treated in metaphorical terms, referring to his saving passion.¹²⁸ The treatise, as we have seen, is a defense of Christ’s intercessory mediation in heaven, where he continues his priestly ministry. By catching a glimpse of Christ’s heavenly intercession, the believer struggling for assurance is cheered. This is certainly not at variance with Reformed theology, although the style does seem to be more directed at the affections than at the intellect. Christ’s intercessory work is not separated from his earthly ministry, his active obedience, his atoning death and his resurrection, but is the continuation of that

ministry. In truth, this treatise is a marvelous development of the true humanity of Christ which leads him to genuine feelings of pity and comfort as he continues to intercede on behalf of sinners. Hence, Cook concludes that although Goodwin's treatise may have influenced Roman Catholic mysticism in the latter's devotion to the Sacred Heart, the treatise itself does not intend the same conclusions.¹²⁹ It is Christ's affection in heaven toward sinners, not their affection on earth toward his physical heart, that is the focus of Goodwin's often mystical language in this treatise. In spite of Cook's cogent and reasonable defense of Goodwin from the charge of mysticism in this particular treatise, the ineffable experience of the *sylogismus mysticus*, described by Goodwin as "a divine whisper"¹³⁰ and by Preston before him as "a divine expression of light, a certain inexpressible assurance,"¹³¹ reflects a development away from the Reformed emphasis on the work of the Spirit mediated exclusively through Word and sacrament.¹³² When related to a marked separation of faith from assurance, this mystical element can direct believers to their inner life rather than to "Christ Set Forth," the title of another Goodwin treatise which we have considered. Goodwin reflects this tension. On the one hand, his main aim is to make Christ the direct object of faith and assurance and to draw believers out of themselves and yet the mystical and subjective element is never far from view, leading one to wonder whether he is at times taking away with his right hand what he so lavishly offers with the left.

The Church and Sacraments

We have seen how Goodwin's discussion of the sacraments follows closely the theology of his predecessors and noticed a remarkably higher view of the sacraments than is often associated with Puritan eucharistic theology. Against the paradigm of Nicholas Tyacke, setting an emphasis on predestination against an emphasis on the sacraments, we find in the Puritans the very contradiction

of that thesis. Through the bi-polar covenant, the divine decree is upheld, but the means appointed to accomplish the decree are hardly underplayed in Puritan theology. Thus, a high view of the “means of grace” is quite consistent with the *telos* of predestination.

Where one may discern the most significant shift (with truly theological implications) is in Goodwin’s ecclesiology, and this locus is often insufficiently considered in debates over the Puritan doctrine of assurance. Although Michael Jenkins, following Torrance, argued that federalism was the source of individualism and a growing sect-consciousness,¹³³ it is difficult to argue that a system so concentrated on union with Christ and federal or representative participation in Christ could lead to individualism. Rather, we have argued that independent polity accounts for a growing individualism and an emphasis on the “pure, gathered church.” Regardless of how earnestly Christ is “set forth,” against preparationism and the *sylogismus practicus*, the emphasis on pure congregations rather than on the mixed assembly that had been prominent in Augustinian ecclesiology and inherited by Calvin, had the effect of heightening the anxieties of ordinary believers concerning their own spiritual state. Calvin would have, not doubt, been bewildered to see independent congregations in which members were expected to supply personal narratives of their conversion, in fact, conversion does not have the significance in Calvin’s system that it obtains in Puritan divinity and exposition.

Unlike Lutheran pietism, Reformed puritanism was able, for the most part, to maintain and even advance the orthodoxy of the Post-Reformation scholastics while emphasizing the practical implications. We have seen how Goodwin manages to keep his balance through the development of a high Calvinism over which he exercised no small influence. The bi-polar covenant of federal theology that settled so much and answered so many of the questions raised by the magisterial Reformation also raised new possibilities of both legalism and antinomianism, as one could stress either the absolute or conditional sides of the covenant. While Goodwin emphasized the absolute

side--worrying about even speaking of faith as a condition, *per se*, for the confusion it could bring in such a context of conditional emphases--he nevertheless fell far short of embracing any of the principal antinomian tenets. He insisted on the use of ordinary means, admitted preparations of some sort (rightly understood), and rejected any notion of justification from eternity. Goodwin mediated between the two parties on the matter of the *ordo salutis* pertaining to faith and union with Christ, arguing that faith *is* the union with Christ just as marriage is the union of the two partners.

The differences, therefore, with Calvin, are not systemic, but pastoral. Even Torrance admits that "the seeds of federal theology may be seen" in Calvin.¹³⁴ As we have seen, there is general continuity as Goodwin attempts to join other divines in fleshing out Calvin's trinitarian, christocentric theology of Christ the Mediator. He is supremely exegetical and pastoral, and anxious to provide a safer haven for doubting souls than he suspected was possible for many in the middle of the seventeenth century. Even his insistence, contrary to the continental Reformed divines, that the sealing of the Spirit is distinct from regeneration itself and is linked to assurance (*fides reflexa*) rather than to faith itself was due to a confidence that election and regeneration were so objectively efficacious that they did not require greater security, unlike Christian experience itself. Why would regeneration need to be "sealed" unless it were somehow lacking in durability or efficacy?, Goodwin reasoned.

If Calvin can be called the theologian of the Holy Spirit, then certainly Goodwin is an able successor. Far from being an enthusiast, Goodwin is nevertheless extremely sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit in applying redemption and effecting the believer's union with Christ. Unlike Calvin, however, he separates the Spirit from the Word in the matter of assurance by the emphasis on a *sylogismus mysticus* which is not really a syllogism at all. Such direct assurances are not

allowed for the Genevan reformer, for although there is in the *Institutes* a great emphasis on the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, this witness is always inextricably linked to Word and sacrament¹³⁵ Goodwin does not deny this outright (and, as we have seen in his discussion of the sacraments, affirms it), but he does undermine it with this notion of an intuitive “beam of light” and divine “whisper.” One way of noticing the difference between Goodwin and Calvin on this point is to review their respective expositions of 1 John 5:7-9, where one reads of three witnesses in heaven—the blood, the water, and the Spirit. Calvin views this as a reference to the Trinity, through the symbolism of the Old Testament rites of washing and sacrifice. He adds, “Moreover, he calls the testimony of God not only that which the Spirit declares in our hearts, but also that which we have from the water and the blood.”¹³⁶ Goodwin, however, understands the blood to refer to justification, water to sanctification, and the Spirit to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who “joins his witness to these other two, his testimony being the greatest, the clearest of all the rest.”¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the Word and sacraments are not utterly divorced from this internal witness, “baptism being the seal of righteousness.” Thus, sanctification may confirm justification only secondarily, since the witness of the Holy Spirit (identical to the *sylogismus mysticus*) is superior to the witness of water (the *sylogismus practicus*).

Perhaps what Calvin would have found rather an unusual extrapolation of his theology in the Puritans in general and Goodwin in particular is this emphasis on the application of redemption and especially the inner working of conversion. Like the elders in the New England Controversy, and the English Puritans who sided with them, Calvin insisted, against all metaphysical dualisms, on the importance of natural means. But unlike the elders, he was more interested in tracing the steps of Christ through redemptive history than in tracing his steps in the believer’s heart. Further, he emphasized the unconditional character of the promises and although the covenantal motif may

indeed be seminal in Calvin, it had not yet become so central or fleshed out that the reformer felt a special burden to keep a balance between the absolute and conditional sides. The conditional note in the Gospel (or, in the Puritans' parlance, the covenant of grace) is absent from Calvin as it is from many of his successors (including Goodwin). After the reformers raised these issues, however, it was necessary to advance beyond Calvin's insights and develop a systematic theology that could explain the main thrust of that trinitarian, christocentric message. And unlike both tendencies in the Antinomian Controversy, Calvin had a more corporate view of Christian experience than Independent Puritanism was especially prone to produce. What one notices in Goodwin is a Donatist tendency that is absent in--indeed, vehemently repudiated by--the Genevan reformer. Goodwin's reaction to the Reformed churches of The Netherlands during his sojourn there points up the sense of spiritual superiority for which Puritanism is frequently criticized.¹³⁸ Furthermore, it reflects the fact that just as Dutch pietism could not claim the entire field for itself by rendering "Reformed" and "pietist" virtually synonymous, so the established English Church, prior to Laud, cannot be set at odds with Puritanism on the basis of an alleged antagonism between either Roman Catholic or Arminian-Erasmanian sentiments and Reformed theology. Within the Reformed movement, and indeed within federal theology itself, there were possibilities for distinct varieties of ecclesiological and practical expressions. This is both the blessing and curse of the Reformed tradition, as it allows for a rich breadth and freedom to explore as well as an open door to excesses that eventually undermine those very distinctives.

Aside from the rather important ecclesiological differences with Calvin and the Reformed tradition generally, the Independent party within Puritanism tended to distinguish faith and assurance more than earlier Puritans had done, just as the Puritans generally tended to distinguish the work of Christ for the believer and the work of Christ within the believer far more than Calvin, emphasizing the subjective application. But this is often done with different pastoral motivations.

One irony in Goodwin's view of faith and assurance is his heightening of the distinction between the two acts of faith. It is ironic because although the theory implies greater disagreement with Calvin than most Puritans would acknowledge over this point, it is motivated by a distinctly Calvinian passion for objectivity and certainty in the exercise of saving trust. The differences between faith and assurance are highlighted by Goodwin not because he wants to weaken the certainty of faith or drive believers to despair, but to underscore the point that even though the experience of the believer may be weak and one may not yet feel that God is favorably disposed toward him or her in particular, such a person can nevertheless exercise a saving and certain trust in Christ as sufficient for that purpose. The uncertainties of Christian experience-- even the uncertainties of Protestant Christian experience--led Goodwin to move the *actus fidei* to what he regarded as the firmer ground of objective hope and certainty. There, even the weakest believer could be justified simply by the sight of "Christ set forth."

Notes to Chapter Twelve

1 Perry Miller, *Errand Into The Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1984), p. 49, cf. *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), *The New England Mind: The Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953)

2 *ibid*, p. 57

3 *ibid*, p. 49

4 *ibid*, p. 51

5 *ibid*

6 Calvin, *Institutes* 2.6.1

7 *ibid*, 4.20.14-16

8 *ibid*

9 *ibid*

10 *ibid*

11 *ibid*

12 *ibid*

13 *ibid*

- 14 The Westminster divines held common grace and divine goodness in nature in high esteem, The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 4 and 5
- 15 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4 20 14-16
- 16 *ibid*
- 17 *ibid*
- 18 James B Torrance, "The Concept of Federal Theology Was Calvin a Federal Theologian?", in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, edited by Wilhelm H Neuser (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1994), pp 15-36
- 19 *ibid*
- 20 *ibid*
- 21 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4 20 14-16
- 22 *ibid*
- 23 *ibid* , 2 7 3
- 24 *ibid*
- 25 See The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit* , Chapter 3
- 26 Cf David D Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, *op cit*
- 27 Torrance, *op cit* , p 26n
- 28 *ibid* , p 35
- 29 *ibid*
- 30 *ibid*
- 31 M Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh The Handsel Press, 1985)
- 32 Basil Hall, "Calvin Against The Calvinists," in *John Calvin*, G E Duffield, ed , Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology (Appleford Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966)
- 33 Alan Clifford, *Atonement and Justification English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1990)
- 34 B G Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison University of Wisconsin Press, 1969)
- 35 Holmes Rolston III, "Responsible Man in Reformed Theology Calvin vs The Westminster Confession," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 23, no 2, May, 1970, p 129 ff Cf *John Calvin vs The Westminster Confession*(Louisville John Knox Press, 1976)
- 36 Tony Lane, "The Quest for the Historical Calvin," *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol LV, no 2, April, 1983, p 93 ff
- 37 Peter Toon, *Puritans and Calvinism* (Swengel, PA Reiner Publications, 1973)
- 38 R T Kendall, *op cit* , p 209
- 39 *ibid*
- 40 Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, *op cit*
- 41 For instance, R T Kendall, *op cit* , pp 5-6
- 42 Cited by James Torrance, *op cit* ,pp 22-6
- 43 *ibid*
- 44 Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith*, *op cit* , pp 40-41
- 45 Goodwin, 8 467

- 46 8 331-3
- 47 John Preston, *The Golden Sceptre*, *op cit*, p 90
- 48 Kendall, *op cit*, p 206
- 49 *ibid*, p 21
- 50 Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1982), p 55, citing Calvin, *Institutes* 2 3 6
- 51 *ibid*
- 52 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 21 7
- 53 *ibid*, 3 21 1
- 54 Miller, *op cit*, p 54
- 55 Goodwin, 8 243
- 56 8 236
- 57 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 18
- 58 R T Kendall, *op cit*, pp 205-220
- 59 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 3 20
- 60 *ibid* 3 2 8
- 61 Goodwin, 8 308
- 62 Owen 5 101-2
- 63 *ibid*, 1 486n
- 64 Perkins, *Works*, I 156, 158
- 65 *ibid*
- 66 Ames, *The Marrow*, *op cit*, p 162
- 67 *ibid*, p 163
- 68 Goodwin, 8 258
- 69 "Some portion of unbelief is always mixed with faith in every Christian" (3 2 4)
- 70 Calvin, *Institutes*, 3 14 5, 19
- 71 Owen, 11 84
- 72 Helm, *op cit*, pp 25-26
- 73 Calvin, *Institutes* 3 2 7
- 74 Goodwin, 8 211
- 75 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 18
- 76 The Heidelberg Catechism, *op cit*, Question 21
- 77 Cf David C Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy, 1718-1723* (Edinburgh The Rutherford House, 1988
- 78 The Westminster Confession of Faith, *op cit*, Chapter 18
- 79 Louis Berkhof, *The Assurance of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI Smitten Book Co, 1928), p 29
- 80 Joseph Alleine, *A Sure Guide to Heaven* (Edinburgh Banner of Truth, 1989 reprint of 1671 text), pp 20-21, 59
- 81 *ibid*
- 82 *ibid*
- 83 Goodwin, 4 273
- 84 Calvin on Psalm 51 3

- 85 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2 11 9-10
- 86 Calvin, *ibid* , 3 11 13
- 87 *ibid*
- 88 *ibid*
- 89 *ibid*
- 90 *ibid* , 3 3 2
- 91 *ibid*
- 92 *ibid*
- 93 Calvin, 2 Corinthians 3 7, *New Testament Commentaries*, *op cit*
- 94 *ibid*
- 95 Calvin, Romans 4 15, *New Testament Commentaries*, *op cit*
- 96 Zacharius Ursinus, *The Major Catechism*, cited in David Weir, *The Origins of Federal Theology* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1990), pp 109, 114
- 97 Theodore Beza, *The Christian Faith*, *op cit* , pp 40-41
- 98 Cf David D Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy*, *op cit*
- 99 Perry Miller, *The New England Mind The Seventeenth Century*, *op cit* , p 389
- 100 Calvin, *ibid* , 3 19 9
- 101 *ibid* , 3 11 13
- 102 *ibid*
- 103 *ibid*
- 104 *ibid*
- 105 Thomas Hooker, ninth book of *The Application of Redemption* (1656), pp 5-14
- 106 Cited by R T Kendall, *op cit* , p 115
- 107 *ibid*
- 108 Goodwin, 6 60
- 109 8 247
- 110 *ibid*
- 111 8 480-5
- 112 *ibid*
- 113 Thomas Gataker, Minutes of September 13, found in Robert S Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord* (Edinburgh T & T Clark, 1985), p 83
- 114 Goodwin, 8 242-4
- 115 8 244
- 116 8 348-50
- 117 7 155
- 118 6 261, 307
- 119 1 251
- 120 1 254
- 121 8 162-3
- 122 Basil Willev, in his *The Seventeenth Century Background* (London Chatto and Windus, 1953), pp 71-73, points out that Milton, also an Independent Puritan (though of a more radical sort), embraced a “twofold sense of Scripture,” but not referring to the Bible and Nature, rather,

he meant an “external” (the Bible) and an “internal” (the Spirit speaking to the heart), and argued that the latter was even higher than the former. Baxter was also influenced by this seventeenth century philosophical spirit, acknowledging in his *Autobiography* that as he grew older, his controlling interest in doctrine now shifted to “internal experience.” While Goodwin would certainly not identify this internal witness with an “inner light” in nature, as the Quakers taught, nor with reason, as the Cambridge Platonists and later rationalists will argue, he does nevertheless reflect this influence on this particular point.

123 Paul E. G. Cook, “Thomas Goodwin--Mystic”, in *Diversities of Gifts*, the Westminster Conference Papers, 1980, pp. 45-56

124 *ibid*, p. 47

125 *ibid*, p. 45

126 *ibid*

127 *ibid*, pp. 47-49

128 *ibid*

129 *ibid*, p. 56

130 Goodwin, 1:254, 8:162-3

131 Paul Cook, *op cit*, p. 48

132 Note the emphasis, against the enthusiasts, of the Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 1, Section 3.

133 Michael Jenkins, *op cit*

134 James Torrance, *op cit*, p. 16

135 Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:147-13

136 Calvin on 1 John 5:7-9, *The New Testament Commentaries*, *op cit*

137 Goodwin, 8:259

138 Thomas Goodwin, et al., *An Apologeticall Narration*, facsimile edition of 1643 document, R. S. Paul (Boston: United Church Press, 1983), p. 4

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- Volume 12 *The Immediate State of Glory for the Spirits of Just Men*
The Great Interest of States and Kingdoms
A Glumpse of Zion's Glory
The World To Come
Zerubbabel's Encouragement to Finish The Temple