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Subject: "THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE REVEREND JOHN OWEN D.D.,  
THE PURITAN DIVINE, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE  
SOCINIAN CONTROVERSIES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY."

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PREFACE

In this work Owen's views on ecclesiastical and doctrinal questions are presented and discussed. The thesis has been divided into two sections. The first deals with his life, together with his views on Scripture, the Church, Schism, and Toleration. The chapter on the Bible was inserted at the beginning since Owen invariably appealed to its authority on all matters relating to the Church or to Christian dogma, and for the sake of convenience the Socinian views on this subject are considered ~~are considered~~ towards the end of this chapter and not in Part II of the thesis. The second section is devoted to the ideas held by Owen and the Socinians on the main Christian doctrines. Although the Socinian views are illustrated by references to, and quotations from, their treatises, I make no claim to have read through all their Latin compositions: in my search for relevant material I have been guided by Owen's references which, however, have been carefully revised and compared with the original texts. Our author for the sake of brevity sometimes modified the original passages, and in order to avoid any misapprehension it may be advisable to indicate that all quotations included in the present work have been translated from the Socinian treatises mentioned in the foot-notes at the end of each chapter and in the Bibliography. Whenever Owen's references have been employed as guides, the fact has been recorded; if the foot-notes contain no such record the extracts cited are the fruit of my own study of these Latin volumes.

I am deeply obliged to the late Very Reverend H. R. Mackintosh D.D., D.Phil., and to the Reverend (ex-)Principal Hywel Hughes D.D., D.Litt. for many invaluable suggestions.

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C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
Preface ... .. .	i
<u>PART I</u>	
<u>Chapter</u>	
I. The Life of John Owen... .. .	1
Foot-notes ... .. .	25
II. The Authority of the Scriptures ... .. .	29
Foot-notes ... .. .	51
III. The Idea of the Church and the Problem of Schism ... .. .	53
Foot-notes ... .. .	78
IV. The Significance of Toleration for Church and State ... .. .	81
Foot-notes ... .. .	115
<u>PART II</u>	
I. A Survey of the History and Main Principles of Socinianism	118
Foot-notes ... .. .	140
II. Owen's anti-Socinian Writings and a Synopsis of his Theology ... .. .	141
Foot-notes ... .. .	154
III. The Place of Reason in Theology ... .. .	156
Foot-notes ... .. .	170
IV. The Doctrine of God ... .. .	172
Foot-notes .... .. .	194
V. The Person of Christ ... .. .	197
Foot-notes ... .. .	227
VI. The Holy Spirit and the Doctrine of the Trinity ... .. .	233
Foot-notes ... .. .	246
VII. The Prophetic Office of Christ ... .. .	246a
Foot-notes ... .. .	264
VIII. The Death of Christ ... .. .	266
Foot-notes ... .. .	285
IX. The Doctrine of Man ... .. .	287
Foot-notes ... .. .	309
X. The Priestly and Kingly Offices of Christ ... .. .	311
Foot-notes ... .. .	328

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
XI	CONCLUSION .....	/330
	Foot-notes ...	346
	Bibliography ...	347
	Abbreviations ...	359.

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PART IChapter I. - THE LIFE OF JOHN OWEN.

## A.

Owen was born at Stadhampton, Oxfordshire, in the year 1616. Both his ~~his~~ parents were descendants of distinguished Welsh families. His father, the village vicar, took care of his early education, and subsequently he obtained classical instruction at Oxford under Edward Sylvester, "a scholarly drudge" (Wood). He entered the University at the early age of twelve as a student of Queen's College, where he studied Classics, Mathematics, Philosophy, Theology, Hebrew and "Rabbinical Lore". For recreation he interested himself in Music and took some physical exercises. After a period of arduous work he graduated in 1632 and became Master of Arts in 1635.

His intention during these years was to enter the ministry of the State Church. Although he never entertained a shallow conception of his vocation, yet he blamed himself in later years for the ambitious selfishness that had dominated his university activities. But he was soon roused from complacency. Buckingham's assassination, the presentation of the Petition of Right, the death of Sir John Eliot, Hampden's trial, and Laud's steady promotion in the Church, were among the stirring events which proved that a struggle would ensue for the attainment of religious freedom and Protestant security. His path became clear after 1637, when Archbishop Laud, as Chancellor of Oxford, caused a new body of University statutes to be drawn up, enjoining obedience to certain rites on pain of expulsion. Owen was among those who refused to subscribe because they considered the rites superstitious. Throughout his life he remained the firm opponent of Laudianism - <sup>its</sup> ecclesiastical Erastianism and its political Absolutism, its Roman Catholic tendencies, its ritualism, and its sacramentalism. It is significant that Owen took

this step in the year which Trevelyan describes as "the first of the revolutionary epoch" (1)

This was followed by a period of crisis in his spiritual life. Deserted by his former friends, with all hopes of preferment extinguished, and distressed by various religious problems, he became the victim of melancholia to such an extent that he avoided all human intercourse, and was even unable to express his thoughts intelligibly. Fortunately for him, however, it was the practice of many Puritan clergymen in those days to become chaplains in the houses of noblemen - a practice which enabled them to escape from Laud's jurisdiction and gave them much influence over the younger members of the household. This path was now open to Owen for he had received orders from Bishop Bancroft before he left Oxford. First of all he became chaplain to Sir Robert Dormer of Ascot and the tutor of his eldest son, and afterwards he obtained a chaplaincy from Lord Lovelace of Hurly (Berks.). But on the outbreak of the Civil War he became a parliamentarian - a step that involved separation from the royalist Lord Lovelace and alienated an uncle in Wales who had intended to make him his heir.

At this juncture he went to London, and took lodgings in Charter House Yard. There he obtained relief from his spiritual distress as the result of hearing a sermon delivered by an unknown preacher at Aldermanbury Church. This was soon followed by the publication of his first volume, "A Display of Arminianism, etc." ("Works" X., 1-137), which contributed a great deal towards establishing his future reputation because it dealt with some of the vital issues of the day - the controversies between the Calvinists and the Arminians. As Trevelyan has indicated:

"Much that every Englishman could appreciate was for the time involved in the fate of the rival dogmas. The victory of Free Will would establish a coercive and despotic government, a sacramental and priestly religion; while Predestination implied

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(3)

"privilege of Parliament, liberty of person, Protestant ascendancy, and the agreeable doctrine of exclusive salvation." (2)

The Committee of Religion, to whom the book was dedicated, decided to publish it, and its appearance procured for the author a presentation to the living of the secluded village of Fordham (Essex) by the Committee for Purging the Church of Scandalous Ministers.

His life at Fordham was both happy and successful. He soon gained a reputation as a preacher and his pastoral diligence was exemplary. Here he finally abrogated Episcopacy and provisionally accepted Presbyterianism. His views on Church Government were expressed in his "Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished" (1643), but these were subsequently declared by him to be immature because "aversion towards Episcopacy and ceremonies" was the only clear principle that animated his conduct in those days, as he had not then mastered the issues at stake in the controversy between the Independents and the Presbyterians(3). He also published a small work entitled, "The Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, unfolded in Two Short Catechisms, etc." (1645) to aid him in catechising the people from house to house.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these efforts, Owen was dispossessed of the living when it was reported that the sequestered incumbent of Fordham was dead, for the patron then exercised his right to present the living to another. This marked the end of his connection with Presbyterianism.

The people of Coggeshall, together with their patron, the Earl of Warwick, immediately invited him to become their minister. He accepted the offer and decided to mould the Church there along Congregational lines. His increasing resentment towards Presbyterianism ~~seems to~~ ~~have~~ have been chiefly due to the growing intolerance of that body. Gardiner Owen has cryptically remarked: "As the intolerance of Laud made ~~him~~ an Puritan, the intolerance of Presbyterianism made him an Independent." (4)

(4)

This transition occurred somewhere between 1644 and 1646. Independency and the Sectaries were evidently in the ascendant during those years. Jordan has clearly shown how rapidly<sup>ly</sup> they were making progress in the Army, in Parliament, and throughout the land, how they had popular clergy in London and influential leaders in the Assembly, and how they were acquiring political and economic power. By advocating a tolerant ecclesiastical settlement they claimed the support of all those who feared the rising tyranny and bigotry of Presbyterianism.(5). However true this was, yet it should be borne in mind that Owen himself claimed that his conversion to Congregationalism was not due to personal contact with those who held such views, nor was it induced by the hope of enjoying earthly advantages; rather does he attribute it to the diligent study of books published on this subject. He carefully compared these with Scripture and with one another, and took the final step after examining and confuting Cotton's "Of the Keys" (6). Once he adopted Congregationalism he never wavered from it.

Whatever his personal motive, his action undoubtedly attracted the attention of some of the greatest and most powerful leaders of the time. As a result he was summoned to preach before Parliament at the close of the first civil war (April, 1646). In accordance with the true spirit of Independency he appended to the published sermon a small tract stressing the necessity and importance of toleration ("Works", viii, 43-69). He also began at this time to make for himself a name as an author and a theologian.

Shortly afterwards he made the acquaint<sup>u</sup>ance of Lord Fairfax, described by Trevel~~ly~~an as a man who "combined the reputation which he had won in the North as a dashing soldier with that of a politician who had committed himself to neither section."(7). They met during the siege of Colchester, which lasted for seventy-six days, during which

Fairfax made Coggeshall his headquarters. The acquaintance rapidly developed into a lasting friendship. Owen preached before the Army at Colchester at a thanksgiving service for the surrender of the town, and later delivered a sermon before the Parliamentary committee at Rumford. For his ~~services~~ services during the siege he received an annual grant of one hundred pounds.(8).

His friendship with influential personages like Warwick (his patron) and Fairfax, his sympathy with Congregationalism, and the reputation he had already gained as a theologian, were among the factors ~~which~~ which caused him to be chosen to preach before Parliament on the day after the decapitation of Charles I (Jan. 30th. 1649). In spite of its suggestive title ("Righteous Zeal encouraged by Divine Protection") the sermon was quite non-committal; yet Owen probably believed that the king's untrustworthy character, and his open deeds of violence upon the liberties of his subjects, had made his beheadal a grievous necessity. Troeltsch speaks of -

"the famous Calvinistic theory of the 'right of resistance' and of reform which belongs to the magistrats inferieurs, who, if the supreme authority fails in its duty, hold a Divine Commission, which entitles them to intervene for the good of Society and the truth of religion."(9).

This view, which had been so uncompromisingly presented by Beza, was accepted by Cromwell and upheld by Owen, whose Calvinism and Predestinarianism led him to believe that what had happened was sanctioned by Providence. We arrive at this conclusion after reading his works, but the sermon itself does not give ~~us~~ us much guidance. Nevertheless, his participation on this occasion caused him to be severely criticised in later years by Vernon and Wood, and the sermon was condemned by the University of Oxford in July, 1683. His concern was not with the past so much as with the future. After telling his hearers that they were themselves responsible for many of the current evils, he appealed for reform.

(6)

B.

A turning-point in Owen's life occurred in April, 1649, when he was first introduced to Oliver Cromwell. The latter had admired a sermon preached by him before Parliament; two days later they met by accident at the house of General Fairfax, and after some hesitation he agreed to accept Cromwell's suggestion, that he should accompany him to Ireland on his proposed Expedition, and help to regulate the affairs of Trinity College. Parliament ordered that the sum of one hundred pounds should be paid to his wife and children during his absence.(10). During his stay in Ireland he was "appointed one of the trustees to administer the property of the Archbishop of Dublin and the Dean and Chapter of Dublin" for the benefit of the College (March 1649-1650)(11). He was also constantly engaged in preaching, being much impressed by the thirst for the Gospel displayed by the Irish. His concern for their spiritual welfare caused him upon his return to England to suggest that the religious condition of the country should be immediately investigated. His representations were seconded by Cromwell, and an Act was passed to encourage religion and learning in the Country. (12)

He then succeeded Thomas Goodwin for a short time as one of two regular preachers to the Council of the Commonwealth. In May, 1650, however, Cromwell returned to London, and immediately decided to depart for Scotland, desiring that Owen and Caryl should accompany him. To this Parliament gave its consent, and Owen joined Cromwell at Berwick. He preached there and at Edinburgh after the victory of Dunbar.

His work as an army chaplain was finished by the beginning of the following year, and for a brief period he returned to Coggeshall. He had proved himself "a Pietist who was above

(7)

all sectional interests and respected by all"(13). Soon he was to be called to fulfil such important duties as would demand the rigid application of all his energy and talents.

C.

Parliament devoted its attention at this time to reforming the University of Oxford, and demanded the withdrawal of those in authority who had refused to take the Engagement, which required them to be "true and faithful to the Government established, without king or peers". Owen and Thomas Goodwin were among several Independent divines then promoted to University posts previously occupied by Presbyterians. Although Owen's appointment as dean of Christ Church seems to have met with general approval at Oxford(March,1651), he himself doubted his own ability to perform those duties on account of his age, the active life he had recently led, the popular mode of speaking to which he had grown accustomed, and his comparative neglect of scholastic pursuits. He had hoped to enjoy some leisure for study so that "the deficiency of genius and penetration might be made up by industry and diligence." (14). In September of the following year Cromwell, as chancellor of the University, conferred upon him the vice-chancellorship and deposed Dr. Greenwood on account of his disaffection to the government. He also delegated all matters which required his assent as chancellor to the consideration of Owen and other Heads of Houses. The University also conferred upon Owen (Oct.,1653) the degree of Doctor of Divinity in absentia - a distinction not coveted by him, but accepted out of respect for the University(16).

When he became vice-chancellor the University was in a particularly ruinous condition. While it flourished at the beginning of the century, when it possessed an excellent library and printing-press, when new colleges and professorships were founded, and when it



received large gifts to encourage scholarship and learning, the outstanding part it had played in the Civil War had wrought a great change throughout the whole establishment. Officers and soldiers had occupied the colleges and halls, and the rest were let out to townsmen; the bursaries were emptied of the public money and the plate melted down for the king's service; the colleges were involved in debts they could not hope to discharge. The deplorable state of the finances weighed heavily upon those who tried to steer it through these difficult times, and so exhausted were the private means of students that Walker says "they appeared in the streets like walking ghosts." (17).

There obviously still remained many forces which preserved the atmosphere of tumult and prevented solid advancement. Most of the chairs were occupied by men who were either secretly attached to the Monarchy and the Anglican Church or had embraced Presbyterianism. Owen also complained of the manifold distractions of the age, the general contempt of law, the poverty of the University, and the audacious licentiousness in which "too many of the students indulge". (18). He was deeply grieved by the views of those, who, antagonised by the royalist sympathies of Oxford, illogically proclaimed that all educational establishments were useless and that the Universities should be suppressed. The University visitors (nominated by Parliament) were also concerned about the political disaffection that prevailed there. (19).

Owen's task was to create order out of chaos - to make the University once more the seat of scholarship and learning. In striving to achieve this end, he and his Puritan colleagues met with so much success that even Clarendon paid a tribute to "The harvest of extraordinary good and sound knowledge in all parts of learning" that was produced during this period (20). The scholars were even comp-

elled to speak either Greek or Latin within the colleges and halls in order to encourage the exchange of ideas with foreigners. Nevertheless Owen and his colleagues, some of whom were frankly illiterate, were content with maintaining the traditional academical standards: they made no substantial contributions to the development of educational and pedagogic methods nor did they attempt to modify the generally-accepted principles of human knowledge (21). New methods, however, were employed to regulate the moral life of the students, and to preserve a religious atmosphere. Discipline was much improved, and each student was required to devote nearly the whole of Sunday to occupations deemed suitable for the Lord's Day, to attend one week-day sermon, and to ~~attend~~ take part in as much evening worship and catechising as his tutor required (22).

In dealing with the various parties and different interests represented at Oxford, Owen manifested considerable prudence. With the exception of certain Quakers, he exercised a spirit of sympathetic tolerance towards men of every creed, whether Presbyterians, Independents, or Anglicans. The Episcopalians were even allowed to use their own liturgy. He took a personal interest in the students, being generous and hospitable towards poor scholars, rewarding modesty and virtæ, and being meticulously careful in the administration of justice.(23).

But he had many enemies who magnified every trifle that might be used to undermine his authority. It was maliciously rumoured, for instance, that he had no respect for the Lord's Prayer(24). Most of these charges were uttered after the Puritans were overthrown and were obviously invented by sworn enemies. Vernon affirmed that he regarded those who defended the habits and formalities of the University as having the "mark of Antichrist" (25), while Wood's malicious caricature of the Vice-chancellor is at least amusing:-

"While he did undergo the said office, he, instead of being a grave example to the University, scorned all formality, undervalued his office by going in *dirps*, like a young scholar, with powdered hair, snake-bone band-strings (or band-strings with very large tassels) lawn band, a large set of ribbons pointed at his knees, and Spanish leather boots, with large tops, and his hat mostly cocked." (26).

He probably attached very little importance to subsidiary academic paraphernalia; but in a contemporary portrait he appears as a tall, grave man, arrayed in all the robes of office, while his contemporaries bear witness to his gentlemanly behaviour. He seems to have been a true representative of the Independents who were then distinguished for their fashionable clothing and graceful demeanour.

Cromwell resigned the chancellorship shortly before his death, and he was succeeded by his son, Richard Cromwell in July, 1658. On account of the part he had played in contemporary politics, Owen was then dismissed from the vice-chancellorship, which was <sup>afterwards</sup> ~~then~~ occupied by Dr. Conant. He related, in his farewell Oration to the University, how difficulties had been overcome and how some definite progress had been made during his term of office: twenty-six had been admitted to the degree of Doctor, three hundred and thirty-seven to the degree of Master of Arts, six hundred and ninety-seven to that of Bachelor of Arts: "Professors' salaries, lost for many years, have been recovered and paid; some offices of respectability have been maintained; the rights and privileges of the University have been defended against all the efforts of its enemies; the treasury is tenfold increased; many, of every rank, in the University have been promoted to various honours and benefices, etc." (27).

It is quite obvious, from this Latin Oration, that he indignantly resented his summary dismissal. Still he looked forward to returning to the "old labours" through which he hoped to be of the greatest service to the Christian Church: "Ego antiquos labores, notas vigiliis, omnia studia repeto; vos, academici! vivite, et valete!" (28). His connections with the University were finally severed in 1659, when Dr. Reynolds was reinstated as dean of Christ Church.

## D.

While he was at Oxford he continued to be interested in political and ecclesiastical questions. He preached many times before Parliament, where he stressed the duty of magistrates to protect and propagate the Christian faith and warned his hearers against the dangers of selfish aggrandisement.(29). These exhortations were timely because, -

"since the war began, the House of Commons, like all assemblies of simple-minded countrymen to whom the disposal of great wealth and power is suddenly committed, had grown to exceed in worldly wisdom". (30).

By the year 1659 he could see clearly the signs of disruption:

"We have peace now", he exclaims, "outward peace ... We may be quickly shaken again ..." (31).

He was chosen to represent Oxford University in the Parliament summoned by Cromwell in 1654, but his nomination was questioned by the Committee of Privileges on the basis of an Act which disabled "all person in holy orders to exercise any temporal jurisdiction and authority." (32). Nevertheless he was closely associated with the activities of Parliament, in issuing complaints regarding the publication of the "Racovian Catechism" and the spread of Socinianism, in advocating the formation of an Established Church supervised by Triers and Ejectors, and in being the chief adviser of a committee nominated by Parliament to draw out a list of "Christian fundamentals". An ineffectual attempt to put a part of his ecclesiastical scheme in operation was made as early as 1653, when Goodwin, Caryl, Lockyer, himself, and others, were nominated by Parliament to be sent, three in a circuit, as commissioners to eject and settle ministers according to prescribed rules.(33). Jordan affirms that -

"this proposal for the administration and discipline of the contemplated Establishment evidently stems from Owen's earlier suggestions, and may be said fairly to represent the conservative Independent ecclesiastical opinion of the period, supported by that portion of Presbyterianism which was not wholly intransigent!" (34)

The scheme fell through at the time because of sectarian opposition to the creation of a State Church, which was supposed to savour too strongly of the old regime; but in March, 1654, Cromwell resolved to form a commission for the purpose of maintaining a high moral standard among ministers of religion - a scheme that was considerably more tolerant than Owen's (upon which it was founded) because it was concerned not with doctrine or church government but with the character of the clergy.(35).

This commission, of which Owen was a member, did much good work in spite of a great deal of hostile criticism. The Arminian Independent John Goodwin and others disliked the arbitrary Calvinism of the Triers, while others pronounced the scheme unpractical because it was centralised at Whitehall and involved seeking after the internal evidence of regeneration, which depended solely upon the integrity of the respondent.(36). But its value may best be gauged by considering the grudging praise bestowed upon it by critical opponents such as Baxter and Walker.(37). Trevelyan says:

"They exercised their power so honestly and tolerantly that the inquisition won the applause of all parties, and kept up the education and usefulness of the endowed clergy to a level which there is no reason to think inferior to the level reached under Laud".(38).

There is reason to believe that Owen was an influential member of both the board of Triers and the commission of Ejectors.

He was also deeply concerned with the educational system of those days. He was appointed in 1654 as one of the Visitors to regulate and to further learning in the University of Oxford - duties which mainly consisted in examining what statutes ought to be abrogated, altered, or added; their report was to be presented to Cromwell and Parliament. In addition, they were told to explain ambiguous or obscure statutes and to determine appeals. Similar duties were assigned to them in connection with Westminster School,



Winchester School, Merchant-Taylor's School, and Eton College. According to Neal, one important result of their activities was the encouragement of stricter and more effective discipline in these various establishments.(39).

A great change in Owen's career, however, occurred about 1657-1658 - a change which may be traced to the time when an attempt was made to bestow upon Cromwell the title of King. Cromwell's personal ambition was opposed by the Army leaders, who were probably antagonised by the growing frivolity prevalent at Court, and by the indiscretions of the womenfolk of Cromwell's household, who were "wholly unable to bear their new honours moderately" (40). Upon the request of Desborough and Pride, Owen drew up a petition, which was designed to prevent Cromwell from wearing the crown, and which was presented to the House by Lieutenant Colonel Mason. When he realised the strength of the opposition, Cromwell immediately professed himself to be well satisfied with the Protectorate.

Perhaps he did this because he felt that to accept the crown would be "an offence to the noblest elements of puritanism" (41), but it is quite clear that Owen had to suffer for his action. There is no evidence to prove that the Protector knew what part he had played in these proceedings - he may have recognised from the style of the petition the hand that wrote it - but after this they never came into close contact with each other. He was not even a guest when Cromwell was inaugurated as Protector, and, referring to his death, Owen remarked: "I saw him not in his sickness, nor in some long time before."(42). On the other hand, this estrangement may also be due to other causes, as the following statement made by the French ambassador suggests: "Another spirit appears at Whitehall, dances having been re-established there lately, and the preachers of the old time are retiring because they are found too melancholic."(43)

Soon afterwards Owen ~~was~~ dismissed from the vice-chancellorship and from the deanery of Christ Church.

After Cromwell's death, and his stern hand had been removed, the forces of disruption found free scope for expression under the weaker rule of his son. Within Parliament itself there was a fundamental cleavage, for the Lower House would not recognise the Upper, while the Army ~~itself~~ was divided into the Wallingford House (so called from the usual place of meeting) and the Presbyterian factions - the former desiring a Commonwealth, and the latter favouring a Protectorate. The desire of the Army leaders, or the Wallingford House Party, was to separate the office of the Commander-in ~~chief~~ of the Army from the Headship of the State, and to make the Protector a tool in their own hands(44). It was probably on account of Richard's weakness that Owen gave this party his support and attended meetings to consider ways and means to depose the Protector and to set up a republic.

But it is difficult to estimate the precise part played by him in the events that ensued. Manton, who stood ~~outside~~ the door while Owen offered a prayer at one of these meetings, came to the conclusion that the words - "He must down, and he shall down" - which formed part of the prayer, referred to Richard Cromwell; but Manton may have been mistaken. Little value can also be attached to Vernon's statement - that he "became the instrument of ruin to that ephemeron Protector Richard Cromwell" - in view of Owen's retort, that he had no more to do with those proceedings than Vernon himself. He probably did little more than advise those who were interested in Richard's deposition. (45)

The full story of the complex intrigues that followed lies outside the scope of this work. Richard formed a general Council of Officers at the request of the Wallingford House Party, Parliament

and the Army were at loggerheads, and the Wallingford House Party, without the Protector's permission, invited the Long Parliament to resume the government. Owen was actively associated with some of these negotiations. When the criticism was voiced that the membership of the Long Parliament was too depleted for that body to resume control, he asked Ludlow to obtain a list of their names, and it was discovered that one hundred and sixty members were still available. This list was taken by Owen to Wallingford House, where a committee was appointed to negotiate with some of the members of the Long Parliament, but, unfortunately, as Davies has remarked, "no detailed account of these conferences has survived." (46). The Long Parliament met soon afterwards, and immediately resolved in favour of a Commonwealth "without a single person or house of peers."

The affairs of the country, however, were still in a very unsettled condition. Some clamoured for the establishment of Presbyterian uniformity, others for the restoration of the monarchy. Several of the gentry invited General Monk, who was then in Scotland, to march with his army into England and set up a free Parliament, promising that if he would do so, they would give him all assistance. By this time the Long Parliament had once more been dismissed by the officers of the Army, and there was anxious speculation as to whether Monk would comply with these invitations. Owen thought he could approach him because he was considered to be an Independent, and so he sent him a letter, written in the name of the Independent Churches and despatched by Caryl, Barker, and others, petitioning him to confine his attention to Scottish affairs lest the nation should once more be plunged into war. (47). The Independents were evidently uneasy because it was rumoured that the General had recently favoured Parliament against the Army, and he might, at this juncture, favour the Presbyterians against the Independents.



Monk's reply, addressed to Owen, Greenhill, and Hook, only excited fresh doubts and fears among the Independents, who felt that the wily General had evaded the issue by taking refuge in vague generalisations(48). Their worst anticipations were realised when Monk, after his arrival in London, refused to negotiate with them. They, in turn, intrigued against him. Led by Owen and Nye they made a private treaty with the officers at Wallingford House, and offered to raise one hundred thousand pounds for the Army if their religious interests would be protected. The fruitlessness of these efforts was mainly due to internal dissensions within the Army, so that Monk easily managed to dislodge the old regiments from the city. After Fleetwood's retirement, the soldiers were left without a leader, and the power of the Army and of the Independents speedily came to an end. The Presbyterians then became predominant in Church and State. They vigilantly checked Independent and ~~Presbyterian~~ Republican advancements while they made secret negotiations with the Episcopalians. It was obvious that events were speedily moving towards the restoration of the Monarchy(49).

Owen then disappeared from the political arena. He was discharged from the deanery of Christ Church on the thirteenth of March, 1660, and Reynolds was restored(50). He then retired to Stadham, the village of his birth.

#### E.

The post-Restoration period of Owen's life was spent in semi-retirement, punctuated by frequent preaching and lecturing, some amount of pastoral work, and the publication of numerous tracts, treatises, and elaborate theological volumes. During these years he became the recognised leader of the Congregationalists, the orthodox conservative core of Independency. For this reason it would be well ~~at this point to indicate briefly~~

to indicate briefly his connection with the Savoy Conference (1658), which produced the Confession of Faith (generally called "the Savoy Declaration") of the Congregational Churches.

This Confession indicated the revolt of orthodox Congregationalism against extreme sectarianism and radicalism, with which it had been compelled for many years to join forces against the threat of Presbyterian bigotry and intolerance. Men like Owen were mainly concerned with removing the basis for the taunt levelled usually against them - that they were dangerous extremists - by proving the orthodoxy of their beliefs and their strict adherence to Scripture in the formation of their ecclesiastical system. Cromwell did not favour the project at the start, mainly because he thought that it would create a greater rift between the Independents and the Presbyterians. The request of the Churches, however, was finally granted. Curtis gives the following concise description of the nature and work of the Conference:-

"Representatives were sent by 120 Congregational Churches in and near London, in response to a circular addressed to them by the Clerk of the Council of State, to a Conference in the Savoy Palace in London. The Conference did not meet till nearly four weeks after the great Protector's death. It elected to prepare a new Confession, and authorized a committee of six - Drs. Goodwin, Owen, Nye, Bridge, Caryl, and Greenhill (all save Owen members of the Westminster Assembly) - to prepare the draft. It consists of a very lengthy 'Preface' descriptive of the work, deprecating coercion in the use of Confessions, which thereby became 'Impositions' and 'Exactions' of Faith, and urging toleration in matters non-essential among churches that held the necessary foundations of faith and holiness; a 'Declaration of Faith', consisting of the doctrinal matter of the Westminster Confession slightly modified, and a System of Polity, or 'Institution of Churches'." (51).

By means of this Confession the Congregationalists hoped to strengthen their doctrinal stability, and to secure more inter-communion among themselves. "The Synod", writes Powicke, "was an attempt (not wholly successful) to achieve consistency. In doing so moderate Independency may be said to have worked out for the first time its own implications...; and developed a corporate self-consciousness; and so became able to see just where it

"stood. This was well; and was bound to come sooner or later!"  
(52)

Owen himself was responsible for the Preface, and much of the work done by the Conference has been attributed to him. While Neal states that it was the authority of Owen, Nye, and the older divines, which brought about the unanimity prevailing in the Synod, Baxter, ascribing it to Owen and Goodwin, makes the following characteristic remark: "So much could two Men do with many honest tractable young Men, who had more Zeal for separating Strictness than Judgment to understand the Word of God, or the Interest of the Churches of the Land and of themselves." (53)

Baxter mistrusted the democratic principle of Independency because he believed that it encouraged separatism; and in his view this Synod indicated that the 'Moderates' (Baxter's description of the Congregationalists who wished to depend on the magistrate rather than upon popular vote) had succumbed to the extremists (those who supported ecclesiastical government by popular vote). He failed to see that Congregationalism at this time was working out its own basic principle; for Congregationalists who have no faith in popular votes are fundamentally inconsistent with themselves. (54).

During the years he had spent at Oxford Owen had been collecting a small congregation at Stadham, and immediately after the Restoration of 1660 he went to minister to their spiritual needs. It is interesting to note that his brother-in-law was a curate there until his suspension in 1662. (55). But this must have been for him a time of profound disappointment. "Puritanism was riding out the storm, and to Owen's eye it looked as if the secular reaction was sweeping away before it every anchorage of morals and religion which the Puritans held dear." (55a)

The elusive phraseology of the "Declaration of Breda" - based originally on Monk's tolerant suggestions, but subsequently so modified by Hyde that any departure from the promises made could be attributed to Parliament - might well have fore-warned the Dissenters that all would not be well with them. Anglicanism was

still a vital force, and its adherents had returned with sharpened prejudices, while their opponents were not supported by national sentiment of the kind that had once energised the Long Parliament. As long as they held the reins of office, the Puritans had excluded all but themselves from any participation in the government. Now they, in turn, were confronted with an equally rigid Anglican exclusiveness, which deemed it axiomatic that no Puritan should have any voice in the control of the legislature.(56). The sectaries were forbidden to meet in large numbers, and their position was so precarious that the London Congregational Churches found it expedient to publish a pamphlet to show that they had no connection with Venner's rising (57).

When everything is taken into consideration, it must be granted that, on the whole, Owen was fortunate: he was not excepted from the benefits of the Act of Oblivion, and even Hyde (afterwards Lord Clarendon) showed him great kindness and respect, and advised him not to hold conventicles but to interest himself in writing against the Roman Catholics. He never complied with the former request, but his onslaught upon Roman Catholicism met with a considerable degree of success, so that Clarendon remarked that he "deserved the best of any English Protestant of late years" and offered him preferment in the Established Church if he would conform. This offer was naturally refused; but Owen took advantage of the situation to sue for toleration for his persecuted brethren.(58).

Persecution was becoming more bitter during these years, and several Acts placed heavy burdens upon the shoulders of Nonconformists: The Act of Uniformity(1662), The Conventicle Act(1664), and The Five Mile Act(1665).(59) Owen's movements during these years are not easy to trace. Calamy mentions him among ministers resident in

London in 1662, but he also had close connections with Stadham in the same year, for there is evidence that he paid tax there for nine hearths in September(60). Definite information is also available concerning his residence during the following year, as the following quotation shows:"Reported, 1663, living in London 'in ye Fields on ye left hand near Moregate where ye Quarters hang, & meets often with(T.) Goodwine'".(61). He continued to preach to small secret assemblies, and whenever the persecution abated, he was even publicly engaged in that work. In doing so he must have undergone many risks. The Clarendon Code continued to be enforced, with a few brief intervals, until the Revolution of 1689, and so suggested ways and means for magistrates and informers to further their personal interests at the expense of the dissenters who were now at their mercy. "In each county", says Trevelyan, "a few magistrates, who were filled with the bitterest rancour against their late oppressors, made revenge the chief duty of their office. Under their patronage there was room for an increase in the numbers, enterprise and professional spirit of the tribe of paid informers, who, when the party strife stirred up by this persecution took new unhappy forms, only needed the example of Oates to rise from audacity to genius of conception!"

(62)

When Owen once paid a visit to Oxford he only had a narrow escape from them. In February, 1664-1665, he was indicted, but not imprisoned, for holding "unlawful assemblies for religious worship". Even during the last years of his life the informers would not give him rest, for one of them reported in June, 1678, that he and Danson had held a conventicle in Leadenhall Street, near the Plough, and in April, 1683, shortly before his death, he was presented at Guildhall Sessions upon a similar charge. On one occasion he was rescued from informers by Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey. Another attempt to involve him in the Rye-house plot also proved fruitless.(63).

The outlook for him, therefore, was most unpleasant. Not only was he himself subjected to personal inconveniences, it must

also have been obvious to him that Puritans were rapidly decreasing in numbers. It is not surprising, therefore, that he more than once considered invitations to join some of his fellows in other lands. For example, he hesitated a great deal before finally rejecting an offer to become the pastor of the Congregational Church at Boston, Massachusetts(64). It has also been stated that he was invited by Harvard College and by certain Dutch Universities to become their president; but, on the whole, the evidence for this must be deemed unsatisfactory.(65).

During the Great Plague of London, many Nonconformist ministers availed themselves of the opportunity to show their mettle by placing themselves at the disposal of the afflicted and giving them spiritual succour. But Owen does not seem to have been a member of that gallant band. After the Great Fire which followed the Plague the laws against Dissenters were partially mitigated, and temporary places of worship were erected, which enabled the Nonconformists to preach to large audiences. Among those who were engaged in this work were the Independents, of whom Baxter somewhat disparagingly remarks: "Dr. Owen (who had before kept off) and Mr. Philip Nye and Dr. Thomas Goodwin, who were their leaders, now came to the city."(66). Owen preached in White's Alley, Moorfields, in 1669, and in the same year took part in a series of lectures delivered by Congregational and Presbyterian ministers at Hackney, Middlesex. At about the same time he ~~also~~ acted as adviser of a mixed church of Independents and Baptists at Hitchin, Herts.(67). A joint Congregational-Presbyterian lectureship was also established by London merchants at Pinner's Hall, Old Broad Street, in 1672, to testify to the agreement of these parties regarding Christian "fundamentals", and to resist the progress of Roman Catholicism, Socinianism, and Infidelity (68).

He contributed four sermons to these "Morning Exercises" (69). Such facts show at least that he used the opportunities afforded him during these difficult years to preach the Gospel and to strengthen the Churches, even though the leisure he enjoyed from persecution was only precarious and temporary because it had no adequate legal foundation.

On more than one occasion he came into close contact with Richard Baxter, who sometimes opposed him in theological controversy, and who seems invariably to have criticised his activities in councils and conferences. Baxter used to send his young men to Cambridge rather than Oxford before the Restoration, -

"partly, no doubt, because under the Commonwealth, Oxford, to a large extent, was controlled by Independents like Dr. John Owen and Dr. Thomas Goodwin, with whom he had but imperfect sympathy." (70).

Persecution, however, brought them closer together. After Owen had published his "Brief Instruction in the Worship of God", popularly known as "The Independents' Catechism" (1667), - a work which dealt with the constitution, ordinances, office-bearers, and members of a Christian Church, - Baxter even entertained the hope of forming a union between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. But nothing came of these negotiations after fifteen months' consideration. (71).

His intimate connections with the Court proved valuable to the Independents during the period when the policy of the government vacillated between alternate leniency and severity; his adversaries often denounced him bitterly for using his knowledge to further the interests of his brethren. (72). It is particularly interesting to note that among the members of his London Church were several distinguished personages, such as the Earls of Orrerrey and Anglesey, Lords Willoughby, Wharton, and Berkeley, and Sir John Trevor. His "Advice to the Citizens of London" (probably composed in 1673, the



year of the Test Act), a strong protest against the persecution, shows that his own more fortunate circumstances did not prevent his sympathising with his suffering brethren.(73). His connections with the nobility brought him into contact with the king and the duke of York. Charles II expressed strong belief in toleration, and told him that he considered the Dissenters to have been unjustly treated. He also gave him a thousand guineas for distribution among the chief sufferers during the recent persecutions. When these facts became known, the Nonconformists were accused of having been pensioned to serve Roman Catholic interests! - an accusation vehemently denied by Owen, who said that no person in authority had ever spoken to him about the propriety of granting toleration to Papists.(74).

Owen was John Bunyan's friend and confidant. Every year or oftener Bunyan used to come up to London, and frequently was his guest<sup>f</sup><sub>A</sub>

"He preached for Owen in his Church at Moorfield's, and for Rev. George Cokayn at Red Cross Street, and for others to whom Owen gladly introduced him. He even lectured at Pinner's Hall where Owen regularly took his turn with Baxter."

Powicke conjectures that on account of doctrinal differences he may have influenced Bunyan and persuaded him to have nothing to do with Baxter.(75). When Bunyan was serving a second term of imprisonment at Bedford in 1676, a petitioner asked Owen for a letter of introduction to Bishop Barlow, Owen's old tutor at Oxford, to obtain his release. Barlow desired to gratify him, but fearing the consequences he advised his supplicants to appeal to the Lord Cancellor, and this expensive procedure was finally adopted. For Bunyan Owen had a profound admiration. When Charles II once asked him "how a courtly man such as he could sit and listen to an illiterate tinker", he promptly replied: "Had I the tinker's abilities, please your Majesty, I would most gladly relinquish my learning."(76).

The few available facts about his domestic life



indicate that it was full of affliction. He married his first wife during the period of his Fordham ministry, and by her he had eleven children, all of whom died young with the exception of one daughter. From a financial standpoint he seems to have been fairly prosperous. He received a legacy of five hundred pounds upon the death of his cousin, Martyn Owen, and before that he possessed some landed property. He was also supported by the proceeds of his numerous writings. His wife died in January, 1676, and six years later he lost his only surviving daughter. After remaining a widower for about a year and a half, he married Mrs. Dorothy D'Oyley, widow of Thomas D'Oyley Esq., of Chiselhampton, near Stadham, who brought him a considerable fortune, so that henceforward he could afford to keep his carriage and country house at Ealing. Here he spent most of his later years. He found it necessary then to employ an assistant to help him in his public duties and to act as his amanuensis. The last of these, David Clarkson, eventually became his successor at Leadenhall Street (77).

For several years before his death he was afflicted by the stone, and asthma frequently hindered him from speaking much in public. He went to live for a while at Kensington, but he soon returned to Ealing, where he had some property and a house of his own. There he died on the 24th. of August, 1683, and he was buried in Bunhill-Fields, where his grave may still be seen. ~~At the time,~~ His last treatise, "Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ", was in the press at the time; and as we read it, we are reminded of words which he uttered on his death-bed:

"The long looked-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have done yet, or was capable of doing in this world."(78).

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FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE.

## A.

1. "England under the Stuarts", 180.
2. Ibid., 154. Soon after the Synod of Dort Arminianism had increasingly become predominant within the Anglican Church. Calvinism was deemed incompatible with belief in the Divine Right of Kings, and it was thought that the best way to destroy Calvinistic logic was to deny its doctrine of Predestination. After he had become Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, and the chief ecclesiastical adviser of Charles I, Laud did not encourage theological controversies, and this may account for the tardiness of pro-Arminian English theologians in acknowledging their kinship with the Dutch Remonstrants. John Goodwin, the Independent against whom Owen wrote his treatise on the perseverance of the saints, seems to have been the first to do this openly in England. The abolition of Episcopacy, which occurred in 1643, led to the crowning triumph of Calvinism in the famous Confessions and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly (1647). Owen's "Display of Arminianism" ("Works", X., 1-137) appeared shortly before Episcopacy was abolished, when the struggle was at its height. As a supralapsarian Calvinist he attacked the views of all the most prominent Dutch Arminians - Arminius himself, Episcopius, Corvinus, Grevinchovius, Vorstius, Venator, Borrius, Bertius and Grotius - and dealt with all the controversial questions with the exception of universal grace, justification, and the perseverance of the saints. (See Goold's preface to the work). He skilfully contrasted Arminian statements with Scriptural quotations, but occasionally he was guilty of presenting his own deductions from Arminian tenets as the actual views of his opponents, or he suggested that the extravagant teaching of extremists like Vorstius were actually representative of the movement. The most important of his other anti-Arminian writings were:-  
 "Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu" (1647: "Works", X., 139-428), which mainly dealt with the "scope" of Christ's Atonement, and which was directed against Thomas Moore's "Universality of Free Grace" (1643); and "The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance Explained and Confirmed" (1654: "Works", XI), directed against Goodwin's "Redemption Redeemed".
3. "A Review of the True Nature of Schism" (1657). "Works", XIII., 222-3.
4. "History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate", II., 25.
5. "The Development of Religious Toleration in England from the Convention of the Long Parliament to the Restoration" (1640-1660), 60-61.
6. "A Review of the True Nature of Schism". "Works", XIII., 223.
7. "England under the Stuarts", 264.
8. Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 376; "Works", VIII., 71-126.
9. Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II., 616.
10. "Cromwell's Letters and Speeches", I., 450.
11. Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 103.
12. Neal's "History of the Puritans", IV., 14, 15; "Works", VIII., 236, 237. Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 158-164. The sermon was probably delivered after his return from Ireland. Asty ("Memoirs", ix) appears to have been misled by the date 1649 on the title-page, which may have been O.S. (i.e., the date according to the old method of calculation). Internal evidence points to this: see Goold's Note, "Works", VIII., 208, and Moffat's "Golden Book of John Owen", 35 (foot-note).
13. Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II.,

928-929.

## C.

14. "Works", X., 492-493.
15. Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 234; "The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell", III., 284-285.
16. Cf. Cawdrey's charge against him, "Independency further proved to be a Schism" (1658), 134, and Owen's answer, "Works", XIII., 302.
17. "Sufferings of the Clergy", I., 124.
18. First Oration, "Works", XVI., 481.
19. Bourne's "Life of Locke", I., 32; Godwin's "History of the Commonwealth", IV., 94.
20. Quoted by Godfrey Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 354-355.
21. Bourne's "Life of Locke", I., 48; Moffat's "Golden Book", 39-40; Trevelyan's "England under the Stuarts", 17 ff.
22. Matthew Henry, "An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Philip & Henry", 25; Asty, "Memoirs", xii; Wood's "Fasti Oxoniensis", IV., Part II., Cols. 190-191.
24. The charge that he had blasphemed the Lord's Prayer was based on a rumour that he had put on his hat when the Prayer was repeated at the close of a service at Christ Church. Men like Meric Casaubon (the author of "A Vindication of the Lord's Prayer"-1660), George Vernon (who wrote the vituperative "Letter to a Friend concerning some of Dr. Owen's Principles and Practices" - 1670), and Wood ("Athenæ Oxoniensis", IV., Cols. 99-100), continued to repeat it even after he had denied it in English and French on the ground that he simply disagreed with the ~~method~~<sup>manner</sup> in which the Prayer was used. For the Prayer itself he professed the greatest veneration.
25. Vernon, "A Letter to a Friend", 12-13.
26. "Athen. Oxon.", IV., Col., 98.
27. "Works", XVI., 512-513.
28. Ibid., 513. This note appears in Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 376:- "A correspondent wrote to Jos. Williamson... that Owen was no longer Vice-chancellor, 'he cannot well digest a private life and seems angry. He has given over preaching at St. Marys on Sunday afternoons and set up an opposition lecture at the same hour in our parish church(?St. Peter's in the East).'"

## D.

29. "Works", viii., Sermons VII-XII (passim.).
30. Trevelyan's "England under the Stuarts", 263.
31. "Works", viii., 467 - "The Glory and Interest of Nations Professing the Gospel."
32. Whitelocke, "Memorials of the English Affairs", 678.
33. "Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum" (Ed. by Firth and Rait), II., 855-858.
34. "The Development of Religious Toleration..1640-1660". 150-151.
35. Matthews' "Calamy Revised", lxx; Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 196-197; Jordan, "The Development of Religious Toleration..1640-1660", 157.
36. Neal, "History of the Puritans", IV., 93-97.
37. Baxter's "Reliquiæ Baxterianæ" I., 72; Walker's "Sufferings of the Clergy", I., 171-173."
38. "England under the Stuarts", 311. For an excellent discussion of Cromwell's ecclesiastical system, see Jordan, Ibid., 158-160.
39. "History of the Puritans", IV., 110-112.
40. Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 263-264.
41. Ibid., 181-182.
42. "Works", XVI., 274. - "Reflections on a Scandalous Libel" (1670). Thomson's "Life of Owen". "Works", I., LXVI.

43. F.P.G. Guizot, "History of Oliver Cromwell" (1854), II., 584. Quoted by G. Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 263.
44. Davies, *Ibid.*, 235-239.
45. "Reflections on a Slanderous Libel". "Works", XVI., 274.
46. Neal, "History of the Puritans", IV., 191-192; "Memoirs of Edward Ludlow", II., 645ff.; Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 239-242.
47. Orme, "Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Religious Connections of John Owen D.D.", 282. Neal reproduces the letter, ("History of the Puritans", IV., 216-218) which Monk wrote in reply.
48. Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 246ff.
49. Neal, "History of the Puritans", IV., 190-224; Trevelyan's "England under the Stuarts", 328-330.
50. Whitelocke, "Memorials of the English Affairs", 699.

## E.

51. Curtis, *Art.* on "Confessions" in E.R.E., Sect. 18, 884b.
52. Powicke, "A Life of the Revd. Richard Baxter", 274.
53. Quoted by Powicke, *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 251.
- 55a. Moffat's "Golden Book", 66.
56. Trevelyan, "England under the Stuarts", 336.
57. "A Renunciation and Declaration of the Ministers of Congregational Churches and Public Preachers of the same Judgment, living in and about the City of London: against the late horrid Insurrection and Rebellion acted in the said City". Matthews' "Calamy Revised", lxx.
58. Memoirs of Owen, written by Asty (pp. xxiii, xxiv), Orme (298-300) and Thomson ("Works", I., lxxx, lxxxi) respectively.
59. Matthews' "Calamy Revised", xii, lxx. For a discussion of the Clarendon Code, see Trevelyan, *Ibid.*, 340-344; and G.N. Clark's "The Later Stuarts", 19-22.
60. Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 376, 565.
61. *Ibid.*, 376.
62. "England under the Stuarts", 342.
63. Orme, "Memoirs", 306, 444-445; Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 376-377.
64. Matthews' "Calamy Revised":- "Invited to become pastor at Boston, Mass., 15 Aug. 1663: partly encouraged the plan and as late as June 1666 it was said that he was likely to come to Boston". (Quoted from "Archaeologica Americana", iii., 209ff.): Orme's "Memoirs", 302-303; Protestant Dissenter's Magazine, III., 447-448.
65. Orme's "Memoirs", 347-349; Wood ("Athen. Oxon. IV., 98) says that he was prevented from going to Harvard "by particular orders from Charles". Cf. Wilson's "History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches", I., 271.
66. Powicke, "Baxter under the Cross", 29.
67. Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 376.
68. *Ibid.*, lxxii; Gould, "Works", VIII., 474; Powicke's "Baxter under the Cross", 72, 73.
69. "Works", VIII., 474-491.
70. Powicke's "Life of Baxter", 143.
71. *Ibid.*, 275ff.; and "Baxter under the Cross", 274-275.
72. Vernon's "Letter to a Friend", 34.
73. Although this work was not published until 1721, I believe that internal evidence shows that it was composed in 1673. Cf. Gould, "Works" XIII., 587-592.
74. Stillingfleet's "Unreasonableness of Separation", which Owen answered in his "Inquiry into the Original, Nature, Power, Order,

and Communion of Evangelical Churches, etc." (1681). "Works", XV. 189-191.

75. "Baxter under the Cross", 57-59.
76. Biographies of Owen written by Asty (p. xxx) and Thomson (p. xcii): Orme, "Memoirs", 398-399; Harding, "John Bunyan, His Life and Times", 54, etc.
77. Asty, "Memoirs", vi; "Vindication of Owen by a Friendly Scrutiny", 38; Thomson's "Life of Owen", "Works", I., xcv, Foot-note 2; Orme's "Memoirs", 314; Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 377, 393-397; Wood ("Athen. Oxon.", IV., Cols., 100-101) could not refrain from making the sarcastic remark that "Owen took all occasions to enjoy the comfortable importances of this life."
78. Orme's "Memoirs", 450-452; Goold's Note, "Works", I., 274; Matthews' "Calamy Revised", 377, contains details regarding his will and extant letters.

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NOTE: The most detailed biography of Owen yet written is Orme's, which has been extensively used as a source of information in composing the above chapter. A few other sources, of a subsidiary character, which have also been read, have been added in <sup>the</sup> complete Bibliography at the end.

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Chapter 2. - The Authority of the Scriptures.

## A.

In a document professing to set forth the 'fundamentals' of Christianity, the Scriptures are declared to be "that rule of knowing God and living unto Him, which whoso does not believe cannot be saved." (1). Since Owen himself was mainly responsible for this composition, the above sentence provides clear evidence of his high regard for the Bible as a primary means of salvation. Like the Puritans generally he believed that it was the sole ultimate authority on faith and conduct - "an absolute law of truth" for Christians in all generations. (2). Belief in the Scriptures, according to him, was the hall-mark of orthodoxy, and those who rejected their teaching should not be allowed to propagate their opinions. (3). No Calvinist was ever more loyal to the Bible than he was (4), and none insisted with greater thoroughness on the need for absolute conformity to its declarations on Church Government and Worship as well as on Doctrine. (5). But it should be understood that he believed the Scriptures could not be rightly apprehended unless they were interpreted in the light of what was taught by the primitive Church, the first four General Councils, and the fundamental tenets of Calvinism. (6).

He then explains that Scripture derives its absolute authority from the fact that God is its Author. There is no need, however, to 'prove' its divine origin, for this is self-evident to Christian believers, who recognise it as easily as the holy writers themselves perceived the transcendent nature of the Revelation which they received and recorded. Faith, in other words, knows that the Bible contains within itself the guarantee of its Divinity.

"God speaking in the penmen of the Scripture, His voice to them was accompanied with its own evidence, which gave assurance

unto them; and God speaking by them or their writings unto us, His Word is accompanied with its own evidence, and gives assurance unto us." (7).

Since its divine authorship was thus intuitively perceived by believers, there was no need to confirm it by human testimonies; all arguments from tradition or even from miracles were really superfluous.(8). Unbelievers, naturally were unable to recognise the divine Word just as those who have abused their eyes cannot see light. Human defects cast no reproach on divine Truth: the fact that some do not believe the Scriptures to be divine makes no difference to the fact itself.(9). Moreover, Owen held that the believer's intuition was corroborated by several facts, such as: the marvellous influence which the Bible exercises over man, causing him to renounce all that is dear to him when he undertakes responsibilities for Christ's sake; its internal harmony, which proves that it has emerged as a totality from one divine Author; and the manner in which it satisfies human religious needs by imparting to men all the information they need concerning the nature of true worship, the method of reconciliation, and the character of true blessedness. Only a divine Book could possess these unique properties. (10).

#### B.

Proceeding to describe how God imparted His Word to man, Owen supposes that He must have used the biblical writers just as musicians employ their instruments, that is, the writers were merely passive instruments in His hands (11). He held the doctrine of "verbal inspiration", and urged that even the Hebrew vowels and points had been dictated by God. It was untrue that these had been invented by the Massoretes because God would not have committed even the punctuation of this sacred text to the skill of those whom He had previously discarded (12). As for the writers it was not

"left to their understandings, wisdoms, minds, memories, to order, dispose, and give it out; but they were borne, carried out by the Holy Ghost, to deliver, and write all that, and nothing but that - to every tittle - that was brought to them."  
(13)

Owen further argues that God would not have taken such pains to impart His Word to men without ensuring that it would be adequately preserved. He was startled by the extensive list of variant readings contained in Walton's "Biblia Polyglotta" (1657), (14) and immediately attacked the editor's views. (15). Walton's great work, it should be noted, was the first of this kind to be published in England. Chalmers has described the "Waltonian Controversy" as "the most interesting collision upon this question that I know of between unlike men of unlike minds." (16).

Owen took his stand upon a priori conceptions of God and of Revelation. He maintained that God (in virtue of His goodness and love) had providentially safeguarded the integrity of Scripture in all ages, - that He would not have allowed it to become so corrupt as to prevent Christians from knowing the Truth (17). That Christ did not rebuke the Jews for neglecting to preserve the text of Scripture is in itself proof that no corruption had occurred before His coming. By divine providence it has been kept intact throughout the ages, and for this purpose various means were employed, of which the following may be cited: the care of the Church, the vigilance of those who handed down the copies from generation to generation, the constant study of the Bible, the value attributed to its contents, and the mutual jealousies of Jews and Christians. (18).

With regard to the variant readings he realised the impossibility of proving their non-existence, in view of the overwhelming evidence of the "Polyglotta", and so he tried to show that their number was not nearly so great as Walton had supposed. He even went so far as to suggest that their existence could



be attributed to God who must have introduced them "for the quickening and exercising of our diligence in our search into the Word of God." (19). He urges that the number of versions must be small because when the Septuagint appeared there existed a standard copy of the Old Testament in the Temple (20), while those that actually exist may possibly be attributed either to the loss of the original manuscripts of Moses, the Prophets, Ezra, and the Apostles, or to the fact that the transcribers were not infallible.(21). The authors of the "Polyglotta", however, seemed bent on increasing the number of lections by including mere variants that had no inherent value, and so their efforts tended to destroy the foundations of our faith in the trustworthiness of the Bible. To avoid this they ought to have submitted all lections to the most careful examination, and the following should without hesitation be deleted: readings not supported by antiquity, small and unimportant variants, lections which involve redundancy, deficiency, or textual incoherence, obvious glosses, and all readings that were evidently misplaced. If this were done the number of New Testament lections would be negligible.(22). Not content with multiplying the number of lections, however, Walton and his colleagues have unwarrantably used translations to correct the Textus Receptus. They had no right to do this unless they were in a position to prove that these were translations of venerable antiquity made from the original text, and that the translators themselves were men of known ability and integrity. But those which they used were -

"of an uncertain original, corrupt, and indeed of no authority from themselves, but merely from their relation to that whose credit is called in question." (23).

To do this was in reality equivalent to -

"making equal the wisdom, care, skill, and diligence of man, with

the wisdom, care, and Providence of God Himself". (24).

Walton's "Considerator Considered" was an able reply to Owen's criticisms, While admitting that the Scriptures had not been wilfully corrupted, he maintained that "small mistakes of no moment" had crept into the text through the negligence of transcribers (25). He had no quarrel with Owen's statement that the Hebrew vowels and accents had existed from the beginning, since the "Polyglosta" merely asserted that the Massorettes had invented more adequate signs to indicate readings which had prior to their time been accepted.(26).

After declaring that no standard copy of the Scriptures was available he challenges Owen to produce any two identical copies made before the invention of printing.(27). Owen, moreover, should have realised that every care had been taken to discover the best lections and to reduce the number of suggested readings.(28). Due attention had been paid to -

"the antecedents and consequents, the analogy of faith, collation of like places, the commentaries of ancient writers of the Church, comparing of other copies, wherein also respect is to be had to the antiquity, multitude, and goodness of the copies in the care and correctness of the scribe." (29).

But since lections still existed the text must to some extent have been corrupted. Whenever doubts arose concerning the genuineness of the reading usually accepted, it was legitimate also to use translations to determine the true text. This is not an attempt to "correct Scripture", but an effort to discover the original text:

"To correct an error crept into the original is not properly to correct the original, but to restore the original to the true reading, for no error is part of the original text, and therefore, when the error can be demonstrated, the true reading is restored, not the original text corrected." (30).

Walton, however, granted that the Textus Receptus contained all truths necessary for salvation, and that different lections existed only where questions of a non-fundamental character were

involved. If more than one explanation of a particular text could be offered, and if all the explanations were consonant with the analogy of faith, it ultimately mattered little which of them was adopted (31)

Owen thus based his belief in the trustworthiness of the biblical text upon his conception of the divine character: he held that God was sufficiently powerful and merciful to overcome the natural sinfulness of the writers, and to employ them as instruments in His almighty hands to produce a Book that was inspired even to the minutest iota. The text was preserved by Him in its pristine perfection to ensure that no negligence on the part of man should destroy its adequacy as a means of Grace. Even lections should be regarded as the products of His Spirit, introduced to inspire diligence in man's search for Truth. Translations, however, since they were human products, ought not to be used to correct the Received Text which God Himself had imparted. Walton, on the other hand, refused to be moved by Owen's doctrinal arguments. He indicated that Owen had no right to suppose that a standard copy of the Scriptures existed, and that it was an incontrovertible fact that a number of lections were still in being even after the manuscript evidence had been carefully scrutinised and sifted. Man's duty was to do his best to arrive as nearly as possible to the original text, and for this purpose a perusal of the variant readings and of different translations was extremely useful. Instead of detracting from the value of Scripture such a procedure helped us to know and to understand the divine message.

This controversy proved a landmark in English Protestant theology, and marked the beginning of a new era. The Scripturalism of Zwingli and Calvin had been degraded by Puritan Scholasticism

into the verbal inspiration theory. Owen was one of the last great exponents of this School, but to some extent even he had to give way before the new influences that were rapidly gaining ground. The mass of evidence placed before him compelled him against his will to admit the existence of some lections. He seems to have been scarcely conscious of this, for he still clung to the belief that God had preserved Scripture intact, to the minutest iota, throughout the ages. He never realised that the doctrine became meaningless unless it could be held in toto. Recent research has abundantly shown that it was Walton who followed the right track; he made a valuable contribution to theology by insisting there was no need to believe in the doctrine of verbal inspiration in order to accept the Bible as the final authority on faith and practice. Scholars have also admitted the correctness of his views on the origin and purpose of the Hebrew system of pointing, and on the value of translations, variant readings etc. as aids to discover the true text.

But while we grant that Walton was the victor in this controversy, we ought to recognise that there were valuable elements in Owen's scheme of thought. His defence of the verbal inspiration theory was valueless, but he is to be commended for his firm hold on the doctrine of the Reformers - that the divine quality of the Bible was obvious to the intuitive perception of faith - even though he sought to buttress it by means of a theory that is no longer acceptable. He perceived the importance of relating the power of Scripture to personal experience; that men needed "the predestinarian miraculous influence of the God who Himself creates faith" (32) -

before they could perceive "the things of God in their certainty, evidence, necessity, and beauty."(33). The Spirit alone, he says, can enable them to compare things spiritual with things spiritual, to perceive the harmony of the faith, and to test the validity of doctrines.

### C.

The value of ecclesiastical testimony, tradition, and interpretation with reference to the seat of authority, was the subject of a controversy between Owen and John Vincent Cane, a Franciscan friar. Cane presented the familiar Roman Catholic position - that ecclesiastical unity could not be achieved without universal submission to papal arbitration. The Scriptures were inadequate for this purpose because they themselves stood in need of being interpreted. The Protestants thought that they were capable of understanding Scripture because they believed that they were guided in a special manner by the Holy Spirit. To make such a claim was impudent, for it implied that they considered themselves superior to the holy Fathers, and "the members of the Sacred Councils".(34).

Owen answers these contentions by affirming that Scripture existed before the Roman Catholic Church; as the Word of God it is the supreme court of appeal in all disputes. There are many who will not recognise the authority of the Roman Church, but who accept the Scriptures as the supreme Law of Faith.(35). There is no need to appeal to the pope in order that the meaning of the Bible may be understood, for God has not made it so obscure as to make it ineffective for achieving the end He had in view.(36). In any case the Roman Church cannot be regarded as a suitable arbitrator, for on many occasions she has shown contempt for

Scripture (37), and has now become so corrupt that it would be absurd to pay any heed to her claim to have authority to guarantee its divine origin.(38).

Although he held the Calvinistic doctrine that the meaning of Scripture on the whole was clear, yet he admitted that certain passages required to be expounded. This shows that in spite of his belief in the verbal inspiration theory, and his antagonism to Roman Catholicism, he did not desire to break away completely from ecclesiastical tradition and the corporate consciousness of the Church. He says that the expositions of men who enjoyed special divine guidance were intended to help us to understand the message of the Bible. Nevertheless, the Word of God as it is contained in Scripture, ought to be sufficient to achieve perfect unity on all essential matters among professing Christians. This unity has not yet been achieved even among Protestants, in spite of their having "so absolutely perfect a rule and means of agreement."(39). They need to apply themselves to the Scriptures and to subject their consciences to the divine Word. But even now they are sufficiently united to agree in rejecting the non-Scriptural teaching of the Roman Catholics on the Mass, Purgatory, and the Pope, whereas the controversies that perpetually occur between the Jesuits and the Jansenists prove that there is not as much unity among Roman Catholics as they pretend.(40).

In this controversy Cane was evidently defending the declarations of the Council of Trent upon the need to rely entirely upon the validity of the Scriptural interpretations offered by the Roman Church.(41). Owen rightly affirmed that the authority of the Church could not be dissociated from the testimony of Scripture. Men have no natural ability to recognise

the authority of either Church or Scripture. (42). The Church, he maintains, is "a society of men called to the knowledge or worship of God by the Word". This means that the Word existed before the Church. The Roman Church had no right to suppose that whenever Scripture referred to the Church it referred to her. The term "Church" applies to the smallest assembly of true believers. (43). Such a Church, however, is infallible only in so far as she faithfully attends to the infallible rule of Scripture. Infallibility, indeed, can really only be predicated of the elect, God's mystical Church. (44). The authority of Scripture is higher than that of the visible Church, as Christ and the Apostles have indicated by appealing to the Scriptures against the claims of the Jews. It is therefore our duty to examine ecclesiastical doctrines in the light of Scripture. (45). It is the Bible, and not the visible Church, which is infallible. This reminds us of Troeltsch's remark:

"The Protestant extension of the Incarnation in the Bible corresponds to the Catholic extension of the Incarnation in the priesthood." (46).

He then proceeds to show that, just as our belief in the Church depends on our acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God, so is our belief in the miracles established on the same foundation. The "argument from miracles" cannot help us to recognise the authority of the Bible for two reasons: firstly, because the testimony of several Scriptural writers is not corroborated by miracles, and secondly, because outside Scripture there is very little evidence for the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles. Hence we should believe in the miracles because we already believe in the Bible. (47)

Cane and Walton thought that since he rejected the arguments from tradition and miracles, and maintained that God

spoke directly through the Scriptures to the believer whose mind and heart were illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that his Doctrine was far too subjective. His view was similar to Castellio's: that only the Spirit could interpret Scripture because He alone could "recognise His Presence in the inner inspiration of the writers of the actual text."(48). Owen also thought it necessary to guard such a doctrine from subjectivism, and he thought that the doctrine of verbal inspiration was adequate for that purpose. That doctrine was superfluous because he had already done justice to the believer's personal experience when he affirmed that the divine authority of Scripture was self-evident to faith, that the Bible bore within itself the evidence of its authority.

D.

Owen's doctrine should be carefully distinguished from that of the Quakers. Seventeenth century Quakerism was the fruit of a long process of development which had its source in the ancient Socratic movement, and was represented by the mediaeval mystics and by sixteenth century humanists such as Hans Denck, Jacob Boehme, and Peter Sturry. This Movement taught that there was an affinity between God and man, that -

"deep in the central nature of man - an inalienable part of Reason - there was a Light, a Word, an Image of God, something permanent, reliable, universal, and unsundered from God Himself." (49).

The Quakers, who held tenaciously to this idea, insisted that no one could see the Light unless he had Light within himself. This inner Light they identified with faith. The following quotations from Weigel might have been written by an English Quaker of this period. Faith, says Weigel, -

"comes by inward hearing. Good books, outward verbal ministry have their place, they testify to the real Treasure, they are witnesses to the inner Word within us, but Faith is not tied to



books; it is a new nativity which cannot be found in a book." Elsewhere he affirms that "the man-made Church" employs as its standard -

"the written Scripture, according to one's own interpretation, or according to books, or according to University men; but in the true Church the measuring reed is the inward Word, the Spirit of Christ, within the believer." (50).

These Spiritual Reformers would not rely upon external means of Grace because they believed that Christ was to be found within themselves.

"What they all say is that there is a Light in man which shines into his darkness, reveals his condition to him, makes him aware of evil and checks him when he is in pursuit of it; gives him a vision of righteousness, attracts him toward goodness, and points him infallibly toward Christ from whom the Light shines." (51).

This Light, which is also called "the Word of God", "the Seed", "the Grace of God", "the Spirit", etc. belongs to every man; but for ever it will remain dormant deep down in his nature unless he wills to identify himself with it.

The Quakers, however, did not regard the Scriptures with contempt; on the contrary, they believed them to be divinely inspired and diligently studied them. But they claimed that it was the Word within which enabled them to interpret Scripture. By following the guidance of that Inner Light they could penetrate through the letter of Scripture and understand its real message. For instance, they held that it was the living Christ who dwelt in their hearts who gave them authority to interpret certain passages allegorically. Hence for them the Inward Word was primary, the External Word only secondary. This is what Barclay has in mind when he affirms that ↴

"the Word of God is, like unto Himself, spiritual, yea, Spirit and Life, and therefore cannot be heard and read with the natural external senses as the Scriptures can." (52).

Thus George Fox, believing that inspiration came from within each man, appealed not to the authority of the Church or of the Bible,

but to that of the individual believer.

These Spiritual Reformers made it their chief concern to develop the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to its logical conclusion. In doing this they made a valuable contribution by stressing the dangers inherent in the formalism and literalism of Protestant scholasticism. Their stress on the Inner Word proved a direct threat to Puritan Bibliolatry, and this was probably the main reason why Owen decided to curb their activities and to criticise their teaching. In 1658 he feared that Quaker beliefs might find favour among the members of Oxford University, and so he attacked them in a Latin tract entitled, "Pro Sacris Scripturis Adversus Hujus Temporis Fanaticos Exercitationes Apologeticae Quatuor". He indicated that when the Quakers declared that Christ and not the Bible was the Word of God they failed to realise that this expression, "The Word of God" was used in two senses. Christ is Logos Hypostatikos because His own Person is the divine Word. But the Bible is the Logos Professorikos, because it has come from God and contains God's revelation of His Will to man. The Quakers were wrong in supposing that the Word of God could not be learnt from books; they had no right to argue from Paul's statement in Rom. x., 8 and Col. iii., 16 that since the Word was in us it could not be Scripture. The divine truth that dwelt in us was the effect of truth that had come to us from without. Moreover the Quakers, believing that men were led by the Inner Light, supposed that there was no need for some believers to expound Scripture for the benefit of others. Such a view contradicted the teaching of Christ and the practice of the Church. Christ appointed pastors and teachers in the Church to interpret the Bible, and the saints throughout the ages have deemed it necessary for certain qualified

persons to explain the meaning of Holy Writ to each successive generation. The Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light had no basis in fact, for man was by nature in a state of darkness and saving Light belonged only to God's elect. Whatever light we had by nature was insufficient for salvation; no internal illumination could take the place of Scripture, which alone contains all saving truths. (53).

Owen had no sympathy with the claim of the Quakers that they could obtain communion with God unaided by the mediation of either the Church or Scripture. He regarded them as victims of auto-suggestion (to use a modern term); their "visions" he considered to be purely subjective, the victims of their own diseased imagination. In his treatises on the Holy Spirit he affirms that Quaker fanaticism is the result of failure to employ the Bible as a standard to distinguish between true and false illumination. It should be noted, however, that his criticisms were mainly directed against<sup>n</sup> extremists, and that he had much in common with a Spiritual Reformer such as Schwenkfeld, who -

"admitted that the inward activity of the Spirit is mediated through the objective authority of the Word and of preaching to the extent that he regarded the Word or the Bible as a vessel which contained a deposit of spiritual experience, and he admitted its importance in kindling a similar inward spiritual movement, like that out of which it had arisen. The Bible was also useful as a standard by which the inner doctrine of the Spirit could be tested." (54).

But even with Schwen<sup>k</sup>feld Owen would have differed on many points. To him the Bible was more than "a vessel which contained a deposit of spiritual experience"; it was not an effect of revelation but the revelation itself. Hence he urged that there was no need of new revelations because all the truths which were needed for salvation were contained in it.

~~The~~ underlying affinity between Owen's Pietism and certain aspects of Quakerism may, however, be discovered in the fact that

both accepted the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Both held that the believer was capable of understanding the meaning of Scripture. But while Owen stressed the objectivity of the Word, the Quakers emphasised its subjective character. It was the "inwardness" of the Quaker doctrine which led Owen to doubt its integrity; he feared that its repudiation of all objective standards would open the door to all kinds of antinomian excesses.

There can be no doubt that his static view of Revelation, his belief that everything not expressly mentioned in Scripture was useless in religion, needed the corrective of Quakerism with its teaching that the divine Word in the heart leads men to a growing apprehension of Truth. Owen was too much under the domination of the letter of Scripture. His criticism of Quakerism, however, was on the whole valid; he rightly drew attention to the need for the objective standards supplied by the Bible and the historical faith. The Quakers tended to ignore their authority when they relegated them to a secondary place. Samuel Fisher, for instance, in his diffused and verbose answer to Owen's treatise - a work bearing the title "The Rustick's Alarm to the Rabbies"(1660), stated that though the Quakers believed the Scriptures to be divinely inspired "Christ, and His living Word in the heart ... is exalted only on the throne".(55). Owen made it clear that the direct influence of the exalted Lord does not imply that Scripture should not be regarded as the primary means of Grace, for no one can form any conception of the Risen Christ except in the light of the testimony borne by Scripture to the historical Jesus.

#### E.

Owen's attitude towards the Socinian conception of Scripture remains to be considered. The Socinians professed to believe in the

divine origin of the Bible, which, they said, contained all saving truth. But they differed from Owen in their idea of the faculty by which man apprehended its contents. This faculty, according to the Socinians, was right reason' They took for granted that all revealed truths could be grasped by human reason, and that any biblical statement which could not be apprehended by reason was not (in that form) a part of divine revelation.(56). It frequently occurred, however, that though certain texts at first glance appeared contrary to reason, on further consideration they proved consonant with it. If no way of making them conform with the demands of reason was open, there was no alternative but to declare them spurious. The grudging qualification was added, - that the more obscure prophetic sections could not be understood without the Spirit's guidance, unless they were already explained by inspired men or by the actual accomplishment of the prophecies.(57).

The attempts made by the Socinians to establish the trustworthiness of Scripture are on the whole unconvincing. Harnack truly remarks that the external 'proofs' of this, which are offered in the first chapter of the "Racovian Catechism", are "of an extremely doubtful kind", while the statement that the Book is true because it is the only source of the true religion, begs the question at stake. They rejected the verbal inspiration theory, and affirmed that the Scriptures were written by fallible men who were not all equally inspired. They claimed, for instance, that the Old Testament was much less trustworthy than the New Testament, which should be regarded as the source and norm of the Christian religion. In this Book God had given man a revelation of His Will and of the way of salvation, and man apprehended His message by means of reason. The Socinians give no hint of the religious

approach which alone occupied Owen's attention.

"There is not even an approach made to discovering lines of connection between the outward revelation contained in the Bible and the nature of religion; what we have, rather, is - on the one hand the book, on the other hand the human understanding! (58).

The Socinians had little to say about the Old Testament, but since the New Testament witnessed to its value it was declared that both Testaments were "equally entitled to belief".(59). Their belief in the superior worth of the New Testament was the only valuable religious principle in their teaching on Scripture, but even this lost its significance to some extent because they failed to show how it was related to the Old. (60). They made so little use of the latter that Cunningham stated that they virtually discarded it as of little more than historical value.(61).

The English Socinian, John Biddle, insisted that the whole of Scripture should be interpreted literally. He says that no one ought to interpret the Bible in a "mystical" or "figurative" manner, "there being no certain rule to judge of such meanings, as there be of literal ones." (62). Then he asks:

"Why now should I depart from the letter of the Scripture in these particulars, and boldly affirm with the generality of Christians ... that God is without a shape, in no certain place, and incapable of affections? Would not this be to use the Scripture like a nose of wax, and when of itself it looketh any way to turn it aside at our pleasure?" (63)

As an excuse for introducing non-biblical terms into the Creeds it has been argued that they were necessary to detect or to exclude heresy, while in fact it is through them that heresies are introduced. Again, it cannot be said that there is any real justification for introducing Platonic or philosophical terms and principles into Scriptural exegesis. (64)

Biddle realised that if this method of literal interpretation were consistently applied, the difficulty of reconciling

contradictory passages might arise, and so he declared that in such cases the following rule was to be observed: the statements concerned should be compared with one another, and if they evidently could not both be accepted one was to be regarded as a "correction" of the others, thus:-

"We see, that when sleep, which plainly argueth weakness and imperfection, had been ascribed to God, Psalm xliv., 23, the contrary is said of Him, Psalm cxxi., 4. Again, when weariness had been attributed to Him, Isa. i., 14, the same is expressly denied of Him, Isa. xl., 28." (63).

If it be asked, How can we know which texts require to be "corrected?" we can only reply by saying that we must use our reason, which is "the only principle that God hath implanted in us to judge between right and wrong, good and bad." (64). Reason, says Biddle, is as a rule disparaged by those who know that several of their most cherished beliefs would be speedily destroyed if they were judged by it. (65). Hence they seek refuge in the vague assertion that Scripture can only be understood by those who have been illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Surely those who make claims such as these ought to submit some proof that they are thus inspired! (66).

Owen denounced Biddle's method as treacherous. He said that the Socinian employed the plausible argument, that Scripture ought to be understood literally, in order to advance his own views. "In this kiss of Scripture there is vile treachery intended." (67). He had no real desire to present the pure doctrine of the Bible, otherwise he would not have omitted to mention some of the most important truths expressed in ~~the~~ it. He does not refer, for instance to the Deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, the Saviour's Merit and Satisfaction, man's corruption, and the efficacy of Grace, and so he gives the impression that the Scripture does not mention them either. He has done this with a purpose, for -

"what he mentions not, in the known doctrine he opposeth, he may

well be interpreted to reject" (68).

This man also pours contempt on God's Word by extricating texts from their contexts, and using them in their isolated form to further his own designs (69). When he criticised the use of non-biblical terms in theology, he ought to have foreseen that this was unavoidable because the Bible can only be interpreted by using terms other than those in the text. (70). Moreover, these terms are useful as antidotes against heresy. So long as they are only employed to express the truth set forth in Scripture it matters little that they have no canonical status. The list of non-biblical terms used in "orthodox theology" was declared by Socinus to contain the following: "Trinity", "Person", "Essence", "Hypostatical Union", "Communication of Properties", etc., and Biddle added to it many others, several of which, according to Owen, were Scriptural. (71). Finally, Owen declares that many Scriptural statements (such as, "This is my body") were intended to be interpreted metaphorically, and to understand these literally would bring contempt upon our religion:

"Interpret them according to the figurative import of them, and that interpretation gives you the literal, and not a mystical sense." (72).

Owen had three main objections to the teaching of the Socinians concerning Scripture and their method of dealing with it, viz. (a) He disagreed with their affirmation that some sections of the Bible were more valuable than others; (b) He disagreed with the statement that human reason could apprehend and judge the contents of Scripture; (c) He depreated the 'boldness' of their exegesis.

Since he believed in the verbal inspiration theory Owen regarded all sections of the Bible as equal in value, and he



argued that the New Testament should not be regarded as superior to the Old because it was more intimately associated with Christ, for by faith the Old Testament saints could perceive Christ in the future, and many Old Testament passages might legitimately be used to prove His Divinity and Pre-existence.(73). Owen belonged to the second generation of Calvinists to whom the Bible was -

"a law, whose aim and nature were of equal value in every part, in which both the Old Testament and the New Testament bear the common official character of revelation, and in which the only distinction between them lies in the fact that certain Old Testament elements have been explicitly discarded by the New Testament." (74).

He also objected to the Socinian affirmation that human reason was the faculty whereby the truth and value of the contents of Scripture could be judged. This, he urged, was equivalent to saying that human reason was superior to the Word of God. The falsity of the Socinian doctrine was evident to anyone who believed in the biblical statement, that man in his unregenerated condition could not apprehend spiritual truth. Moreover, even if we accepted the general principle here expressed, we should still be faced with the question, Whose reason should be accepted as the ultimate standard? Hence it would be far better to accept a statement as true merely because it was expressed in Scripture. Our study of the Bible ought to be guided by the following rule:

"Whatever God, who is prima veritas, hath revealed is true, whether we can comprehend the things revealed or no." (75).

Finally, he regretted that the Socinians used their high scholarly qualifications to expound Scripture in such a "desperately bold" manner. It was their habit to criticise the expositions which were generally accepted, but they offered no adequate alternative interpretations, with the result that "they have left nothing stable or unshaken in Christian religion".(76). This lack of respect for

traditional exegeses was plainly evident in the "Annotations" of Hugo Grotius, who was much influenced by Socinianism.(77). However valuable might be the Protestant practice of allowing free enquiry into the contents of Scripture, it was not without its dangers, for if Protestants misused their freedom they supplied the Roman Catholics with a good vantage-point for attacking them. On the one hand one might adhere too rigidly to traditional expositions; on the other hand, one's interpretations might be so loose as to destroy the very foundations of faith. We must be "neither captivated to the traditions of our fathers ... neither yet carried about with every wind of doctrine." (78). As Owen observed the anomalies which followed the practice of placing the Bible in the hands of the laity, he clung all the more tenaciously to the doctrine of verbal inspiration.

The history of Christian thought since the sixteenth century shows that the Socinians contributed extensively to the development of modern biblical exegesis. Their stress upon reason as a determinative principle encouraged the growth of individualism, while the fact that they were unhindered by the verbal inspiration theory made them free to investigate the Scriptural documents afresh. Their direct contribution to religion was negligible, but they gave an impetus to scholarship that indirectly has proved of great value to religion. They helped men to realise that questions concerning the genuineness, authorship, dates, etc. of the manuscripts of Scripture should be investigated along the lines usually followed when dealing with similar problems pertaining to other ancient documents. They must also be commended for perceiving that the New Testament was superior to the Old, even though the reasons

which led them to this conclusion were unsatisfactory. It is now realised that the value of the Old Testament does not depend (as they thought) upon individual references to it in the New Testament, but rather upon its being the means whereby we obtain knowledge of the spiritual and historical background of the New Testament.

Nevertheless, the Socinians actually reduced Scripture into a collection of precepts. Owen rightly charged them with insincerity when they paid tribute to its formal authority, for they were unprepared to receive its teaching when it conflicted with their own ideas. He instinctively revolted against their exaltation of human reason into a position of supreme authority to pass judgment on Scripture. His interest differed fundamentally from that of the Socinians in that it was primarily religious. To him the Bible was the divine Word of revelation, and only those who had been spiritually regenerated could understand its message.

There are three fundamental Christian sources of authority which should never be separated, viz. the Church, the Scriptures, and the believer's experience of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. If one of these is ignored it is probable that Christianity itself will be perverted. Without refer<sup>e</sup>nce to Scripture the Church tends to claim for herself a false absolutism; she inclines to distort the original Gospel witness in favour of her own tradition. Owen's protest against this tendency to a measure involved him in the contrary danger of attributing to Scripture the sole authority, for by advocating the verbal inspiration theory he really sought a substitute for papal authority. But however defective that theory was it had the practical value of ~~sk~~ having given stability to the immature churches of Owen's day. Scripture as an authority, however, must not be severed from the tradition

(50a)

of the believing Church and the responsive Christian heart. Owen's sensitiveness to these qualifications is clear from his own stress upon the need for biblical exposition and the experience ~~x~~ of regeneration. In spite of his repudiation of the Roman Catholic conception of the Church, tradition, and papal infallibility, he himself insisted that Scripture ought to be interpreted in the light of the first four Councils and of Calvinistic maxims, and he never considered the Bible by itself to be an adequate bulwark against the advance of heresies. In doing this he recognised the value of tradition in exegesis. It becomes clear, therefore, that he adhered in practice to the threefold authorities - Scripture, the Church, and the believer's experience of transforming Grace. He insisted that the Bible as a whole was divinely revealed, that it should be interpreted by means of approved theological principles, and that it was verifiable in experience.

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FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO.

1. Powicke, "A Life of the Revd. Richard Baxter", 121-123.
2. Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 72.
3. "The Humble Proposals of Mr. Owen and other Ministers" (1654), referred to in Masson's "Life of Milton", IV. 391-392.
4. Curtis, Art. on "Confessions" (E.R.E.), Sect. 16, 862.
5. "A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God and Discipline of the Churches of the New Testament." (1667). "Works", XV. 454-455; and "The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance Explained and Confirmed". (1654 - Preface). "Works", XI. 44-45.
6. "A Peace-Offering, in an Apology and Humble Plea for Indulgence and Liberty of Conscience." (1667). "Works", XIII. 552.
7. "Of the Divine Original, Authority, Self-Evidencing Light, and Power of the Scriptures." (1659). "Works", XVI. 307.
8. Ibid., 310.
9. Ibid., 321.
10. Ibid., 324, 343, 337.
11. Ibid., 299.
12. Ibid., 383.
13. Ibid., 305.
14. "Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture." "Works", XVI. 347.
15. Owen grouped three tracts under the general title, "The Divine Original, Self-Evidencing Light and Power of the Scriptures, etc." "Works", XVI. 281-476. They dealt respectively with the divine origin of Scripture, the integrity of the Hebrew and Greek texts, and the doctrinal errors of the Quakers. The second was mainly a criticism of Walton's views, and the third was written in Latin. See Goold's Prefaratory Notes to the various tracts.
16. Chalmers, "Institutes of Theology", 161-162.
17. "Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture." "Works", XVI. 350.
18. Ibid., 358.
19. "Of the Divine Original, Authority, Self-Evidencing Light, and Power of the Scriptures". "Works", XVI. 301.
20. "Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture". "Works", XVI. 408.
21. Ibid., 353-355.
22. Ibid., 366-377.
23. Ibid., 419.
24. Ibid., 357.
25. Walton, "The Considerator Considered" (1659), 63-64.
26. Ibid., 200.
27. Ibid., 68-69.
28. Ibid., 140, 145.
29. Ibid., 89-91.
30. Ibid., 92.
31. Ibid., 70-71.
32. Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II., 470.
33. "Of the Divine Original, Authority, Self-Evidencing Light, and Power of the Scriptures". "Works", XVI. 326.
34. Cane, "Fiat Lux", 30, 56-57, 135-136, 159-160, 366.
35. "Animadversions on a Treatise Entitled 'Fiat Lux'". "Works" XIV. 37.
- 36<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>. Ibid., 84, 247, 273.
37. Ibid., 350-351. (From "A Vindication of the Animadversions on



- 'Fiat Lux'") (1663).
38. Ibid., 329-330.
  39. "Animadversions on a Treatise entitled 'Fiat Lux'. "Works", XIV. 55.
  40. "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'. "Works", XIV. 245-246.
  41. Curtis, Art. on "Confessions" (E.R.E.).
  42. "Animadversions on a Treatise entitled 'Fiat Lux'. "Works", XIV. 71-72; "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'. "Works", XIV. 268.
  43. Ibid., 89, 299-300.
  44. Ibid., 301-303.
  45. Ibid., 79-81.
  46. Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II. 485-487.
  47. "Of the Divine Original, Authority, Self-Evidencing Light, and Power of the Scriptures". "Works", XVI. 330-331.
  48. Troeltsch, Ibid., 762-763.
  49. Rufus M. Jones, "Spiritual Reformers", xxx.
  50. Ibid., 146-147.
  51. Ibid., 345.
  52. Ibid., 348.
  53. Gould's Prefatory Note. "Works", XVI. 424-425.
  54. Troeltsch, Ibid., 757. For Owen's treatises on the Spirit see "Works", III & IV.
  55. Fisher, "Rusticus ad Academicos in Exercitationibus Expostulatorius Apologeticis Quatuor. The Rustick's Alarm to the Rabbies, etc." (No pagin.) Preface.
  56. "The Racovian Catechism" (Rees), 14-15.
  57. Ibid., 19.
  58. Harnack, "History of Dogma", VII. 138-139.
  59. "The Racovian Catechism", 3ff.
  60. ~~Biddle's A Twofold Catechism~~, ~~Preface (No Pagin.)~~ Harnack, Ibid. <sup>140</sup>.
  61. ~~xxx~~ Cunningham, "Historical Theology", II. 160.
  62. Biddle, "A Twofold Catechism", Preface (No Pagin.).
  63. Ibid.
  64. "A Brief Scripture-Catechism for Children", Preface (No Pagin.).
  65. "Brevis Disquisitio", Preface (No Pagin.).
  66. Ibid., Chap. iii., 5-9.
  67. "Vindiciæ Evangelicæ" (1655), "Works", XII. 84.
  68. Ibid., 143.
  69. Ibid., 63.
  70. Ibid., 67.
  71. "Disputatio de Adoratione Christi", Chap. X.; Biddle's preface to his "Twofold Catechism". These are mentioned by Owen in his "Vindiciæ Evangelicæ". "Works", XII. 47.
  72. "Vindiciæ Evangelicæ". "Works", XII. 64, 118.
  73. Ibid., 328-329.
  74. Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II. 586.
  75. "Vindiciæ Evangelicæ". "Works", XII. 209, 68, 208.
  76. Ibid., 179.
  77. Ibid., 9.
  78. Ibid., 69.
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Chapter 3. - THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH AND THE PROBLEM OF SCHISM.

## A.

The breaking up of the uniform mode of Church government and worship which characterised the Mediaeval Church, called for the establishment of new ecclesiastical bases, and many controversies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries centred around questions of this nature. After the Reformation two main types of Protestant Churches came into existence, viz.

(a) Those which preserved the character of institutions possessing the objective treasures of Grace and Salvation (e.g., the Lutheran, Calvinistic, and Anglican, communions), and received the masses within their folds;

(b) The sects, who stressed the need for regeneration and personal holiness, and were comprised of small groups of Christian believers. These always seemed on the point of splitting up into still minuter sections differing from one another in their beliefs, practices, and mode of government.

Since John Owen was a Congregationalist we shall be chiefly concerned with that denomination. But it is important to notice that he represents a movement which endeavoured to preserve both the objective character of the Church as an institution created by the Word, and the stress upon personal holiness characteristic of the sects.

Though many of the principal beliefs of Congregationalism bore a marked resemblance to those of the Spiritual Reformers and the Baptists, it was Robert Browne (1550?-1633) who first clearly expounded its distinctive tenets. He affirmed that the Church ought to depend entirely upon the inward power of the Holy Spirit, and that her worship should be based entirely upon Scripture. He

demanding a converted ministry, and emphasised that the religious life of a truly Christian community should be founded on a covenant between the members and God and between the members themselves. Christian Churches, he said, were voluntary organizations whose members had separated themselves from this evil world, and so no secular power ought to have authority over them. Church and State should be completely separated, and all local congregations should be allowed self-government.

Browne's work did not bear immediate fruit; but soon there appeared another advocate of these principles in the person of Henry Barrowe (1550? -1593). He~~x~~ also was a staunch believer in the "holy community". Barrowe urged that the Inner Word ought to be supreme. Like Browne he taught that the Church ought to regard herself as separated from this world, and that her constitution should be based on a covenant of which the sacraments were the sign and seal. Each congregation was to be absolutely independent, and was to be governed by three kinds of officers, viz. pastors, elders, and deacons, all of whom were to be elected by popular vote and voluntarily supported by the community. The officers, however, received their authority from the living Christ, who alone through His Spirit could produce unity among the members. Although he maintained that the right to administer discipline and excommunication belonged to the church, he was prepared to grant that the State had authority to expel those who professed unorthodox beliefs. Barrowist congregations were invariably Calvinistic in doctrine. (1). Most of the principles sponsored by Browne and Barrowe were also advocated by John Owen.

Congregationalism ought to be carefully distinguished from the Independency of Cromwell's days. The fore-runners of the latter



were probably small groups of people who held mystical notions. Like the Congregationalists they believed that holding conventicles was the best means of infusing life into the Church. Many such groups existed in England, and the nebulous condition of religious thought during the Commonwealth and the Protectorate provided a congenial atmosphere for them to flourish. Parliament was indeed predominantly Presbyterian, but the Army contained large numbers of such "enthusiasts". Independency was much influenced by foreign ideas. It was essentially a "spiritual" movement strongly coloured by mystical or chiliastic conceptions; it advocated the complete severance of the Church from the State, emphasised the value of lay Christianity, and claimed absolute freedom to preach and to prophesy. It was within this movement that individualism found its most complete expression. But its desire for freedom to worship soon developed into complete lack of restraint, and the Quakers and Ranters may be regarded as its direct descendants.

Congregationalism has frequently been confused with Independency because for a number of years the two movements were closely associated with each other in their attempts to secure religious toleration, and to effect changes in the political and ecclesiastical systems then in vogue. For this reason the Congregationalism of the period that preceded the Savoy Declaration (1658) has been described as "the conservative core of Independency". That Confession, however, is mainly significant as an indication of the desire of Congregationalists not to be confused with Independent extremists. (2).

#### B.

Owen defined "an instituted Church of the Gospel" as -

"a society of persons called out of the world, or their natural worldly state, by the administration of the Word and Spirit,

unto the obedience of the faith, or the knowledge and worship of God in Christ, joined together in a holy band, or by special agreement, for the exercise of the communion of saints, in a due observation of all the ordinances of the Gospel" (3).

He draws special attention to the "divine calling" which separates the members of a Christian Church from this evil world. The "calling" occurs through the Word, the miraculous element that constitutes the wonderful unity prevailing within the congregation. A Church thus brought into being through the Word is characterised by doctrinal unanimity, submission to Christ, and the exercise of mutual love(4). Behind the operation of the Word is the eternal predestinatory decree of God, which separates the elect from the reprobate and employs the Church as an organ of Grace to redeem mankind. Owen perceived the need of voluntary response on the part of believers, but the stress which he laid on the Word preserved the objective character of the Church.

The close affinity of his thought with sectarianism is particularly evident in his doctrine of the Church-covenant which affirmed that a believer, when he became a member of a Christian community, entered into a covenant with God and with his fellow-members. Since God had called him out of the world to know, worship, and obey Him, the believer pledged himself to obey the divine Law and to exercise Christian charity. The Anabaptists had already given this idea considerable prominence, but it is probable that Congregationalists like Owen took it over from Scripture. (5)

Owen affirms that it is the duty of a Christian Church to render implicit obedience to Christ's Law. It is the 'ecclesia stricte dicta', which only includes those who have been 'born again'. Believers who have been called together by Christ voluntarily -

"walk together in the due subjection of their souls and consciences unto His authority, as their King, Priest, and Prophet, and in a holy observation of all His commands, ordinances, and appointments"

They also organise themselves according to the perfect Church pattern set forth in the New Testament. Even when he composed his "Duty of Pastors and People distinguished" (1645), he anxiously sought for a form of Church government that would be in complete harmony with Scripture.(7), and throughout his life he insisted that true ecclesiastical reformation consisted in reducing the Church to its primitive constitution. All churches, said Owen, could be so reformed, and the superiority of Congregationalism consisted in its having made more thorough reformations along these lines than any other body of professing Christians.(8). The divine teaching of the New Testament concerning religious institutions and ordinances must remain unchanged until the end of the world, and so believers have no right to introduce practices not specifically enjoined by it. Accordingly, like the followers of Huss and Calvin, he rejected all doctrines, forms, and ceremonies which were not sanctioned by Scripture. The Bible was regarded by him as a complete and authoritative manual for the Church in all ages. By neglecting or adding to its ordinances, men apostasised from the purity of worship (9).

But this statement was somewhat qualified by the concession that certain early practices, such as the washing of feet, the holy kiss, etc., were no longer obligatory, since they were once observed by the Church not because they possessed any inherent value, but because of her desire to conform with the local habits of the regions where the Gospel was first planted. The gift of healing and the practice of anointing the sick with oil had likewise become extinct. New Testament injunctions, according to Owen, were of abiding worth only if they were commands addressed by Christ to the whole Church, if the aid of divine Grace was required to obey them, and if their performance was acceptable in the sight of God.

The Gospel enabled conscience to distinguish transitory practices from those of abiding worth. A New Testament<sup>h</sup> injunction <sup>h</sup>which possessed the following characteristics should be observed in all ages : if it is clear ~~xxx~~ -

"1. That it be a command of Christ, manifested by His Word or example proposed unto our imitation, Matt. xxviii., 20; 2. That it be given and enjoined unto the whole Church, with the limitation of its administration expressed in the Word, 1 Cor. xi., 25; 3. That unto the due performance of it, Gospel grace be required in them that attend unto it; 4. That it teach, or represent, or seal, or improve some grace of the covenant, and have a promise of acceptance annexed unto it." (10).

C.

At an early stage in his career Owen renounced Anglicanism and Presbyterianism and became a Congregationalist. He did this because he believed that Congregationalism adhered more faithfully than the others to the demands of Scripture. He held that Church membership should be a purely voluntary response to the operation of God's Word, and that a Church brought into being and governed by the Word was both universal and eternal. Such a Church included all true believers everywhere.

This universal Church, however, was composed of "particular churches", that is, local congregations formed on the voluntary principle. Local assemblies of this kind were called "churches" in Scripture. Christ Himself must have established some of them, for many of His sayings pre-supposed their existence. For instance, when He commanded that the cause of an erring brother should be presented before "the church" (Matt. xviii., 15-20), He obviously meant that he should be summoned before a local congregation and not before the universal Church! Local congregations founded by missionaries were called "churches" (Acts xiv., 23), and many apostolic epistles were addressed to such churches. (11) One might indeed say that local congregations called by the Word and

voluntarily obeying Christ's will are the only true Christian Churches, and all other ecclesiastical systems, which are based on geographical, national, or racial considerations, are inadequate. For this reason the constitutions of Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, or Presbyterianism, fall short of the ideal:

"Ut una familia, una urbs, oppidum unum, aut pagus unus, una gens, unus populus, unum regnum, una esset ecclesia, nunquam nusquam Christus docuit. Sed constitutionis ecclesiae particularis evangelicae, fons est fidelium Christi discipulorum voluntaria obedientia." (12).

The ruling Head of this Church is Christ. It is both superfluous and unscriptural to imagine that there exists another visible head such as the Pope. The Roman Catholic Cane had maintained that Christ was the "Head of influence", who "may and does supply the invisible part of His Godhead influence upon His mystic body", but that the Pope was the "Head of Government" through whom God preserved the visible identity of the Church in all ages, and without whom there could be no truth or unity.(13). To this Owen retorted that both these offices were fulfilled by Jesus. Through His Spirit He is the invisible Head of influence, and through His Word He is the sole Head of government, who safeguards the identity of the Church in every generation and preserves the Truth that she proclaims.(14).

Christ governs particular churches through men whom He has endowed with special gifts for that purpose. To grant that others have authority under Him in no way detracts from His sovereignty.(15). The Scriptures contain explicit directions regarding Church officers. During the earliest years of the Christian era our Lord appointed Apostles, Evangelists, and Prophets, to hold "extraordinary offices", and for that purpose endowed them with "extraordinary" spiritual gifts; but once the first generation of believers had passed away the Church was governed by those who held "ordinary"

offices - by "pastors, teachers, bishops, elders, and guides", among whom there was no distinction of rank. The Pope is not even mentioned in Scripture.(16). Owen pleaded with Hammond that the office of a presiding bishop was also unknown in the primitive Church, because the Ephesian "bishops" were really elders. The offices of "diocesan and metropolitanical prelates" were derived from alien sources, and were designed "to accomodate ecclesiastical or church affairs to the state and condition of civil government." Instead of following human tradition or our own whims and fancies there should be a general return to the constitution of the Apostolic Church. Wherever the Scriptures do not give specific guidance concerning a particular issue, their teaching ought to be supplemented by the forms and practices observed by the early post-Apostolic Church, which in general may be regarded as conforming with Christ's will.

This is Owen's cry:- "Give us the churches of Christ, such as they were in the days of the Apostles and down to Ignatius, though before that time (if Hegesippus may be believed) somewhat defloured, and our contest about church officers and government will be nearer at an end than perhaps you will readily imagine."

Owen believed that all "ordinary" Church officers ought to be appointed by the believing community. He had sufficient faith in the universal priesthood of all believers not to follow the Calvinistic practice of curtailing the authority of the congregation by erecting limits to safeguard the Church against the democratic excesses which might arise from the popular ballot.(18). He thought that to impose rulers upon a Church was derogatory to the liberty of believers under Christ. Nevertheless, the ministers or elders chosen by the Church were not the servants of the congregation who appointed them, for they did not derive their authority from the Church. They are the servants of Christ "from whom, by virtue of His law and ordinance their ministerial office and power are received."(19). "Though they have their power by the church, yet they have it not from the Church!"

Owen recognised three distinct types of Church officers - the pastor, the elders, and the deacons:-

(a) The pastor must be solemnly set apart for his office by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands by the presbytery of the Church of which he is to be the minister. It is of particular importance that he should have had a genuine experience of conversion. His task is to preach the Word, to administer the sacraments, and to be generally responsible for the spiritual welfare of his flock. He may not confine himself to performing only a portion of the duties attached to the ministerial office, nor can he claim pastoral supervision over more than one Church at the same time, for these practices are not commended by Scripture.

(b) The elders are to assist the pastor in the rule and government of the Church; but they are not usually expected to teach or to administer the sacraments. Owen had little sympathy with the fanatical demands of those Cromwellian Independents who claimed lay preaching as a right. The main duty of the elders was to "have regard to the holy walking of the Church" - to administer discipline after the cases under consideration had been presented to, and judged by, the whole brotherhood. (21).

(c) The task of the deacons is to regulate Church finances, to look after the poor, and to supervise the external affairs of the community "by the collection, keeping, and distribution of the alms and other supplies of the Church." (22).

#### D.

He taught that Christ's authority ~~extended~~ not only extended over the constitution of the Church but also regulated its worship. The imposition of liturgies, for instance, ought to be discouraged because they were of human origin. The Old Testament had advocated the use of external aids and symbolisms in divine worship, but after



Christ's Ascension they had become superfluous. The spiritual gifts bestowed by the Exalted Lord upon His followers had caused their worship to differ much from that of Old Testament saints, and when men still persist in imposing liturgies upon Christian Churches, they inadvertently reveal their own laziness, negligence, and lack of dependence upon the divine Spirit.(23) The Lord's Prayer ought not to be quoted as a precedent for introducing liturgy into public worship, for that Prayer was originally intended for use in private devotions. The employment of liturgies imposes such a uniformity upon public worship as to prevent faithful ministers from introducing modifications suitable to the requirements of various congregations. Christ Himself amply provides for all the needs of the Christian ministry, and only when they tend to introduce unedifying practices ought the liberty of the people in this connection to be curtailed.(24).

Closely associated with Owen's deep regard for the letter of Scripture was his Calvinistic abhorrence of every kind of idolatry. For instance, he indicated how the Roman Catholics, after introducing images to instruct the people in religious truths, had in the end regarded them as objects of worship. No prototype was honoured by an image that represented him in a deformed manner before the people. Especially was this true of God, who was so incomprehensible that even when He chose to reveal Himself the people could perceive in Him "no manner of likeness or similitude". Moreover, it was futile to argue that such images were not intended to represent the divine essence, and that they were only meant to indicate "some divine manifestations of His excellency or presence", for religious honour, in any case, could not be ascribed to them without incurring the guilt of idolatry. It should be remembered



that God's command, not human intention, was the decisive factor in this case, and He had expressly forbidden the use of images in religion.(25). The arts of painting and sculpture were originally invented to serve the interests of idolatry, and when they were employed in religious worship they inevitably tended to elevate the creature at the expense of the Creator.(26). The believer had no need of such intermediaries when he held communion with his Maker. The products of human imagination had indeed proved themselves to be a definite hindrance in the act of worship.

Owen's Calvinistic renunciation of images and paintings is an instance of the break with the Mediaeval Church which occurred as the result of this effort to return to the original biblical pattern. To quote Schechenburger:

"In the Calvinistic church development the aim is not so much a mere reform and spiritual continuation of historic Latin Christianity as a phenomenon which in principle is a new formation of Christianity directly formulated from the Scriptures according to its original standard form." (27).

Such a religion may be ugly and unattractive, but by stressing the need for deepening the moral and spiritual life, it laid the foundations for the development of that great Art which can never be achieved without prior self-discipline. This has been duly emphasised by H.G.Wood, who quotes P.T.Forsyth's remark, that "there is something incomplete in artistic taste till it see with so great an artist as Plato, the beauty of Puritanism."(28).

Finally, Owen encouraged every effort to ensure that the people could follow Church services intelligently. He said that this was demanded by Scripture, reason, and the example of the Ancient Church(29). The usual Protestant arguments were employed by him against the Roman Catholic retention of Latin, which , he

contended, neither added to the majesty of their services nor acted as a symbol of unity. What superficially appeared to be a bond joining together Christian churches in various lands, ~~was~~ actually a barrier between the Church and the people. If God alone were intended to understand the prayers, speech itself would be superfluous. But when prayers are said in public the whole assembly should pray; hence they should be expressed in a language understood by the people. (30).

#### E.

The term "schism" was frequently used in the theological and ecclesiastical disputes of Owen's day. Its connotation, however, was so uncertain that all religious bodies sought to charge it on those who differed from them: Roman Catholics employed it against Anglicans, and Presbyterians against Congregationalists. At various times Owen defended Congregationalists, Nonconformists, and Protestants, against this charge. The Congregationalists probably felt the brunt of this attack, since the loose ties which bound them together made it more difficult for them to refute the allegation.

Owen perceived that his first task was to formulate an adequate definition of the much misused term - "schism". After studying the Bible he came to the conclusion that "schisms" were -

"causeless differences and contentions amongst the members of a particular church, contrary to that (exercise) of love, prudence, and forbearance, which are required of them to be exercised amongst themselves, and towards one another." (31).

There are obviously no schisms in God's invisible Church, for its members are ipso facto bound together by the profession of a common faith and the exercise of mutual charity. Hence the question to be discussed is: How far can the members of a local congregation disagree with one another without being guilty of schism?

He maintained that submission to Christ and the exercise of

of mutual love were the bonds uniting the members of any particular Church. One man or a group of men might secede from such a Church, and one Church might refuse to hold communion with another, without being schismatic, so long as their actions were the results of a true effort to obey conscience, and were not accompanied by an unwarrantable desire to destroy the peace of God's universal Church. (32). The Congregationalists had seceded from other Churches in obedience to conscience; but, while they disagreed with the views of other professing Christians, they bore them no malice, and so they could not be legitimately charged with schism.

These contentions did not satisfy Owen's opponents. His most virulent critic was Daniel Cawdrey, who detected in him a schismatic spiritual pride arising from his belief in the jure divino character of Congregationalism. Cawdrey said that he had identified the true Church with the visible Congregational Churches when he maintained that Congregationalism alone had succeeded in basing its ecclesiastical system upon a purely Scriptural foundation. (33). This implied an uncharitable despidal of all other forms of worship, of which practical proofs were offered in his secession from Presbyterianism, his continuous efforts to win men over from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism, and his admission that he attached no value to his episcopal ordination. His manifest contempt for both Presbyterianism and Episcopalianism evidently proved him guilty of schism. (34)

In his reply Owen expressed his belief in the possibility of reforming all Churches according to Scripture if there existed a true desire for such a reformation. The superiority of Congregationalism consisted merely in its willingness to travel farther along this road than any other ecclesiastical body. (35). "I do indeed believe", writes Owen, "that wherein their way and our way differ, our way is according to the mind of Christ, and not theirs." (36)

But he had never stated that he attached no value to his ordination at the hands of a bishop. Moreover, he was willing to grant that the Presbyterian churches were true Christian churches, although this did not imply that they were not open to criticism. For instance, the Presbyterian method of ordination, while it had some value, was not so efficacious as they thought it was. Owen affirms:

"I do not maintain a nullity in their ordination, as to what is the proper use and end of salvation, ... though I think it neither administered by them in due order, nor to have in itself that force and efficacy, singly considered, which by many of them is ascribed to it." (37)

Congregationalists had seceded from other ecclesiastical bodies in obedience to conscience, for they had considered it their duty to effect a more radical reformation in Church government and worship according to biblical standards. They sought the Truth above all ~~the~~ things, and tried to render implicit obedience to Christ. While they recognised the value of the Christian elements retained by other organizations, they still felt it was right for them to dissociate themselves from them, because they had perceived vistas of Truth and Obedience which could not be realised within the other systems in their present form. They did this, however, in the spirit of charity. Secession of this kind was not schismatic but truly commendable.

Owen defended Nonconformity against the claims of Anglicanism, by maintaining that the Anglicans themselves were the ones who were really guilty of schism. Through their unscriptural impositions and negligence of God's commands, they had made Nonconformity a grievous necessity. Their terms of communion were neither required by divine law nor consistent with Christ's rule, while many of their tenets conflicted with Apostolic practice and with Christian liberty. Their liturgy, ecclesiastical polity, and

oath of canonical obedience, for instance, were non-Scriptural impositions. Owen here traverses ground that was familiar to his contemporaries. The following Anglican practices, he urges, are particularly repugnant to Nonconformists:-

the use of the sign of the Cross in Baptism, kneeling at Communion, the religious observation of holidays, the constant use of liturgy with a corresponding disregard of Christ's spiritual gifts, the scantiness of religious instruction imparted in parish churches, the réun<sup>o</sup>ciation of other religious assemblies where spiritual benefits had been received, and the refusal to allow local churches to choose their own pastors.(38).

They have not only introduced unscriptural practices into their scheme of government and mode of worship, but have also disobeyed Christ's explicit commands. Christ affirmed that pastors should take immediate care of their flock, and that whosoever repented of his sins, believed in Him, and obeyed His teaching, should be admitted to the sacramental privileges of the Church. Of these injunctions the Anglicans have taken no notice.(39). Their attitude towards the Sabbath is an instance of their perpetual tendency to accomodate "the laws, precepts, and institutions of God, unto the lusts, and the present courses and practices of men."(40). Many contemporary evils can be traced to this neglect of the Sabbath, which is one of the most effective means (if rightly observed) of propagating the Gospel(41). Hence between Anglicans and ~~Protestants~~ Nonconformists there can only be a communion consisting in faith, love, and their corresponding fruits.(42). Nonconformists cannot unite with the local parish churches, since the latter do not govern themselves, and therefore cannot reform themselves. Accordingly, any man who desires to do so on conscientious grounds, may "peaceably .. withdraw communion from such churches, (and).. provide for his edification in others."(43). Yet there ought to be no ill-feeling between Anglicans and Nonconformists:

"The rule of Scripture, the example of the first churches, the nature of the Christian religion, and the present interest of the Protestant religion among us, do call for mutual forbearance, with mutual love, and peaceable walking therein."(44).

In a sermon, entitled "On the Mischief of Separation" (May, 1680), Stillingfleet, the dean of St. Paul's, cleverly sought to turn one of the chief weapons of the Nonconformists against themselves, by maintaining that their dissent was proving advantageous to the papal cause. Hitherto the Nonconformists had urged that the unreformed liturgy and practices of the Established Church savoured too strongly of Roman Catholicism, so that Stillingfleet shocked them when he presented the contrary argument, - that the Nonconformists had considerably weakened the Protestant cause by their schismatic refusal to identify themselves with the Anglican Church, which he considered to be the chief bulwark against the advance of Popery. He held that their recalcitrant attitude was based on a fundamental inconsistency: Although admitting that the Anglican Church was a truly Christian Church, yet they persisted in their dissent!

~~He~~ Owen's "Brief Vindication of the Nonconformists from the charge of Schism" was the most acute defence of Nonconformity that appeared at this juncture. He affirmed that there was no need to eliminate Nonconformity in order to withstand the assaults of Roman Catholicism, since for this purpose external uniformity was only of secondary importance. Popery could be successfully withstood if there were sufficient love and co-operation between the various Protestant Churches. Nonconformity could only be obliterated by subjecting Anglicanism to a thorough reformation on the model of Scripture. One might as well ask a man to exchange real gold for alloy as appeal to the Nonconformists to yield up their principles and conform with Anglicanism in its present form.(45).

In a similar manner he defended Protestantism in general from the charge of "schism". After maintaining that perfect unity and harmony cannot be achieved by visible churches, he indicates that the Roman Church herself is not in a position to claim that doctrinal unanimity resides within her fold. The controversies that are going on, and the fact that her doctrines periodically undergo a measure of transformation, - prove that the "unity of the faith" is not perfectly realised at one and the same time throughout the Roman Church. He grants, however, that it is equally difficult for Protestants to be perfectly united among themselves, for even if they agreed in acknowledging that Scriptural truths were eternally valid, there would still be no agreement as to the relative importance of those truths. But this has no vital consequence, because in the last day God will deal with men as individuals and not as members of Churches.(46).

He then argues that only if a Church has faithfully adhered to Scripture can she have the right to claim authority over other Churches. The mere fact that she is the Mother Church is not adequate for this, because such authority does not depend on historical relationships.(47). The pretensions of the Roman Church are of no value, since she forfeited her claim to authority when she departed from the New Testament model. The "old Catholic faith" was corrupted when the Roman bishops and clergy sought power for themselves, and this Church has now established herself upon such rotten principles as papal supremacy and infallibility, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the religious veneration of images.(48). But the believer does not require her guidance; his conscience intuitively perceives what is in accordance with God's Will. To him the divine origin of Christianity is self-evident. Our religion bears within itself the

guarantee of its authority.(49)

By the aid of Scripture and conscience the believer is thus able to see how the pure Roman Church fell into her present condition through apostasy, idolatry, heresy, schism, and profanity.(50).

"She hath renounced many of the important truths which the old Roman Church once believed and professed, and so is fallen by apostasy; and she hath invented or coined many articles pretended to be of faith, which the old Roman Church never believed, and so is fallen by heresy also."(51).

Now she cannot conform with Scripture and the Early Church unless she repudiates many of her practices, especially the following:

her claim to impose her rites, ceremonies, customs, and traditions upon other persons and churches; her exaltation of the Pope to spiritual and temporal supremacy, together with her belief in his infallibility; her use of physical force to compel men to accept her teaching; and her idolatry.(52).

This Church is guilty of schism because of her apostasy and heresy. By imposing on men beliefs and practices which contradict the spirit of Christianity, and especially by insisting that all true Christians must subject themselves to papal authority, she has compelled those who desired to adhere to Truth and Righteousness to secede from her, and so has created a rift between herself and all other Churches(53).

In his treatises on "Schism" Owen consistently advocated a few fundamental principles. The true Church, according to him, is that which conforms with the New Testament model and with the Church of the Apostolic Age. These early patterns clearly expressed Christ's will, and believers clearly perceive that it is their duty to secede from those ecclesiastical systems which have departed from them. But it is equally obligatory for them to preserve the spirit of good will among themselves, combined with a ready sympathy with all truths retained by other denominations. Even towards the Roman



Church they must try to exercise the spirit of moderation:

"Though we like not the Popery they have admitted, yet we love them for the Christianity which they have retained."(54).

Secession is not schismatic unless it is accompanied by lack of Christian charity, or when those who secede intend thereby to weaken the witness of Christ's universal Church.

F.

Owen's activities during the Commonwealth and Protectorate show that he did not then advocate Browne's idea that Church and State should be completely separated. His parliamentary sermons and the part played by him as a member of the body of Triers and Ejectors, indicate that he believed it was the duty of the State to propagate the Gospel and to secure a converted ministry. He even favoured the formation of a State Church which would include many diverse elements within her fold. He held that only the civil government could remove the prevalent ecclesiastical abuses. Nevertheless, it should be noted that he carefully emphasised the spiritual autonomy of local churches. Although he granted that State-formed commissions could expel unfit pastors and recommend candidates for the ministry, the authority which he attributed to them was mainly of a negative character. He never ascribed to them the power of over-riding the judgment of individual Churches by imposing pastors upon them without their consent.

At an early stage in his career he was a Presbyterian, and there can be no doubt that he retained a certain amount of sympathy with Presbyterianism until the end of his days. He left that body because of its bigotry and intolerance. He was one of those responsible for the Savoy Declaration, which for the most part closely follows the Westminster Confession. More than once he declared that ecclesiastical synods were useful for mutual

consultation and to ensure the establishment of doctrinal and practical unity among the churches. But in the preface to the Savoy Declaration he affirmed that Confessions should not be imposed upon anyone. Ecclesiastical synods, he declared in the "True Nature of a Gospel Church", are necessary to secure the unity of the faith, to heal divisions, to ensure the just administration of discipline, and to maintain purity of worship.(55). His views on "ruling elders", as Gould indicates, were in complete harmony with those of Presbyterians.(56).

Presbyterianism had much in common with Congregationalism, and during the last years of Cromwell's rule this affinity became evident.

"The Church systems of Presbyterian and Independent had this in common, that they were both democratic. Presbyterianism required an atmosphere of comparative equality among the congregation, and an eldership chosen from the middle class."(57).

Once the fear of Presbyterian bigotry was dispelled, Congregationalism became steadily more conservative, so that it seemed as if the two systems could be amalgamated. There was but slight doctrinal differences between them, and both parties were prepared to maintain the purity of the faith by punishing those guilty of extreme aberrations from the truth. As Jordan says, -

"the disposition of Independency to coalesce with moderate English Presbyterianism had become apparent as early as 1652, and in Parliament this union had been complete since 1656." (58)  
 "The distinction between a moderate Presbyterian and a conservative Independent was, indeed - as Cromwell was to discover - barely perceptible." (59).

Owen thought that the two parties might have been united if

Presbyterianism had been established at the Restoration:

"Had the Presbyterian government been settled at the king's restoration, by the encouragement and protection of the practice of it, without a rigorous imposition of every thing supposed by any to belong thereunto, or a mixture of human constitutions, if there had any appearance of a schism or separation continued between the parties, I do judge they would have been both to blame" (60)

Richard Baxter therefore hoped that Owen would support his scheme to unite Presbyterianism and Congregationalism.(61).

"Baxter tried to forget former aversions; and, thinking of him simply as a leader of the Congregationalists - indeed their most trusted and sober leader - resolved to see if the Doctor and he could discover some broad common ground upon which the Nonconformists generally might live and work in peace."(62).

The failure of the scheme was no doubt partly due to Baxter's imprudence. He injudiciously attacked the Congregational method of Church government, maintaining that it encouraged schism, and made it possible for excommunicated persons or heretics to gather together and form a "church". The Congregationalists, he maintained, did much harm by insisting on such strict discipline, while their habit of limiting their activities to the nominal members of their fraternity was not commendable. The Presbyterians (who once had hoped to take the place of the Anglican Church as the State religion of England) set before them an example; their pastors considered themselves responsible for the whole parish in which they worked, and not merely for those who were officially attached to their churches. Moreover, the Independents were wrong "in yielding so large a place to the vote of the people and so small a place to the rule of the magistrate."(63). Another bone of contention between them was the question regarding communion with parish churches.(64). Owen could not agree with Baxter as to the measures which ought to be adopted for debarring undesirable persons, such as the Socinians and the Roman Catholics, from the proposed united Church. Baxter contended for the Bible, which Owen thought was by itself insufficient to exclude Socinianism. The latter therefore urged that it would be well to accept the first four OEcumenical Creeds also as standards

of orthodoxy. (64)

A study of these negotiations is valuable because it helps us to understand how tenaciously Owen clung to the fundamental principles of Congregationalism. He was perhaps "the most consistent Independent of his age" (65). While Baxter had a passionate respect for visible ecclesiastical unity (66), Owen, as we have already seen, attached no great value to it (67). From the start, therefore, he had no deep sympathy with Baxter's proposals, for he regarded differences of opinion among professing Christians as the necessary outcome of variety in temperament and outlook. He must have perceived that in the proposed union the Congregationalists, on account of their inferior number, would be required to surrender more of their distinctive tenets than the Presbyterians; and he could hardly be expected to show much enthusiasm for an arrangement which implied the sacrifice of elements in a system of Church government deemed by him to be of divine origin, for the sake of a uniformity which he did not regard as of fundamental importance. Hence nothing came of this experiment even though negotiations were continued over the space of fifteen months.

#### G.

From this study of Owen's conception of the Church we have seen that he strenuously advocated the Protestant principle that the Holy Scriptures ought to be the centre of the Christian community. Through the divine Word the Will of the Living Christ is known, and by voluntarily adhering to its precepts believers subject themselves to His rule. For this purpose have they been predestinated and called out of the world. Like the Anabaptists and the early founders of Congregationalism he taught that membership should be based upon the voluntary principle, and that the Church should be strictly preserved from contamination by the world. With this he combined a thorough-going Calvinistic theology, as Barrowe had done before

him, as well as a tendency to retain the Calvinistic idea of the Church as a treasury of Grace contained in the Word and the Sacraments. At one time, during the Commonwealth and Protectorate, he appeared to sway between the idea of a Calvinistic National Church and that of separatist voluntary communities. This, however, was due to the peculiarities of that period; and in any case he hoped to obtain the one without sacrificing the other. Any hopes for the formation of a National Church to his liking were dimmed and finally quelled at the Restoration. From that time on he devoted himself to the task of founding and strengthening voluntary congregations based on a Church covenant between the members themselves and between the members and God. He held that such a Church had the right to choose its own officers, which included a pastor, elders, and deacons, and that it had the power to determine all questions of discipline. Its autonomy must be respected. As Freund has written: "Die Gemeinde der Glaubigen regiert sich selber und ist in sich abgeschlossen." (68). Its worship must be strictly regulated by Scripture and the practices of the Early Church. Images, for instance, must be banned, for their use inevitably leads to idolatry and is in any case contrary to God's command. To impose liturgies upon Churches likewise casts a reproach upon Christ, who has promised to give His people the continuous help and guidance of His Spirit.

Several of his main principles are still acceptable to Nonconformists. He rightly contrasted the Roman and Anglican hierarchy, who have become involved in a system of social distinctions, with the New Testament "bishops" or "presbyters" who were in charge of local Churches. He recognised the dangers that arise from the use of images, which, though they may occasionally

prove helpful as aids in meditation and prayer, may also hinder those who cannot distinguish between the Object of religious worship and the sensory means devised by man. While liturgies may likewise offer many advantages, by constant use they tend to be reduced to the level of the common-place; they may encourage laziness and cause the Church to fall out of touch with the constantly changing world in which she exists.

But his conception of the Church was too much under the influence of Puritan bibliolatry and a static conception of Revelation. His drastic rejection of all ecclesiastical developments which occurred after the first centuries of the Christian era is no longer convincing, mainly for the following reasons:-

Firstly, it has been discovered that the Early Church probably possessed no uniform system of government, and that it was the absence of such a system that lay at the root of the prolonged controversies on this matter. So great was the diversity among primitive Christian institutions that -

"the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, and the Independent can each discover the prototype of the system to which he himself adheres."(69)

Secondly, even though it were discovered that the Early Church conformed to one clear type, the Church of to-day might decide that it would be inadvisable to return to it, for now she knows by experience that modifications must be introduced to meet the different circumstances which prevail in successive ages.

But if it be granted that development and evolution in such matters are more or less inevitable, reference to Scripture and the Early Church of the kind commended by Owen would still have its value, for it would be needed to ensure that every step taken by the Church agreed with the nature and genius of our religion

As H.G.Wood indicates, it is "still a necessary safeguard against the easy assumption that, in the development of Church order, whatever is right."(70).

During this process of development Christians have frequently been divided: Church history contains some tragic instances of excommunication; the temporal sword and the appeal to primitive instincts, unfortunately, have been thought suitable instruments for realising the unity of the faith. It is to Owen's credit that he perceived that external uniformity achieved in these ways was of no abiding value, and that Truth could only be grasped through persuasion and conviction. However much he believed in the ~~ju~~ divino character of Congregationalism, he never forgot that Christian love and charity should operate among Christians, even though they differed from one another in their views concerning external forms of government and worship. He rightly perceived that there could be no schism if the law of love operated and if freedom of conscience prevailed. His vision was limited, but he was a true herald of better days. In modern times Curtis can say:-

"However we may deplore the divisions of Christendom, signs are now abundant that the age of schism is over, and that, for the great mass of Christians throughout the world, catholicity is no longer synonymous with external or even intellectual uniformity. Some of the smallest sects have been most catholic in spirit because most tolerant by serious conviction."(71).

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FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE.

1. Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II., 993, 661-663.
2. Ibid., 666-667, 776-777, 976.
3. "A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God and Discipline of the Churches of the New Testament". "Works", XV., 479. (1667).
4. "Of Schism: the True Nature of it discovered and considered with reference to the present Differences in Religion". "Works", XIII., 128ff. (1657).
5. Jordan, "The Development of Religious Toleration in England", I., 263. For Owen's teaching concerning this Covenant, see "The True Nature of a Gospel Church and its Government" (published posthumously in 1689); "Works", XVI., 27. It was distinguished from the Covenant of Grace, as the following sentence shows: "This covenant which we intend is not the covenant of grace absolutely considered; nor are all the duties belonging unto that covenant prescribed in it, but the principal of them, as faith, repentance, and the like, are presupposed unto it; nor hath it annexed unto it all the promises and privileges of the new covenant absolutely considered: but it is that which is prescribed as a gospel duty in the covenant of grace, whereunto do belong all the duties of evangelical worship, all the powers and privileges of the church, by virtue of the especial promise of the peculiar presence of Christ in such a church." (Ibid.)
6. "A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God etc.," "Works", XV., 486.
7. "The Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished: or, A Brief Discourse touching the Administration of Things commanded in Religion"; "Works", XIII., 1-49 (passim). Cf. "Eshcol; A Cluster of the Fruit of Canaan, etc."; "Works", XIII., 51-87 (published, 1647).
8. "A Review of the True Nature of Schism, with a Vindication of the Congregational Churches in England from the Imputation thereof, unjustly charged on them by Mr. D. Cawdrey." (1657) "Works", XIII., 267f.
9. "The Nature of Apostasy from the Profession of the Gospel and the Punishment of Apostates declared, etc." (1676); "Works", VII, 219-222.
10. "A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God"; "Works", XV., 466-467.
11. Ibid., 481-484.
12. "Theologumena Pantodapa; sive de Natura, Ortu, Progressu, et Studio, Verae Theologiae". "Works", XVII., 451. (Cf. Goold's Prefaratory Note). (1661).
13. Cane, "Fiat Lux", 52-53, 191-193, 362-377.
14. "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'". "Works", XIV., 371. (1664).
15. Ibid., 371-373.
16. "Animadversions on a Treatise entitled 'Fiat Lux'" (1662); "Works", XIV., 164.
17. Preface to "The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance Explained and Confirmed"; "Works", XI., 47. (1654). See also Ibid., 50.
18. Cf. Troeltsch's remarks: "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II., 592.
19. "A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God"; "Works", XV, 499.
20. Ibid., 501.
21. Ibid., 505. Actually pastors and teaching elders are identical, and between them and ruling elders there is no difference of order, only a distinction of gifts. "It is one power of office, the duties whereof are of several kinds, referred unto the two general heads, first of teaching, by preaching the word and



- celebration of the sacraments, and secondly, of rule or government." (Ibid., 514-515).
22. Ibid., 506. Here it may be noted that the question as to whether the Churches might be supported by the State was much debated during the Commonwealth. In the Barebones Parliament(1653) it was proposed "to abolish tithes and patronage, and to set up a voluntary Church system".(Trevelyan, "England under the Stuarts",305). Owen was willing for the State to support ministers and preachers from public funds, although he admitted that the method of doing so was debatable. ("Two Questions concerning the Power of the Supreme Magistrate about Religion and the Worship of God, with one about Tithes, proposed and resolved"; "Works", XIII., 515-516). (1659)
  23. "A Discourse concerning Liturgies, and their Imposition"; "Works", XV., 47-55; and "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer as the Spirit of Grace and Supplications, and the Duty of Believers therein"(1682); "Works", IV., 339.
  24. "A Discourse concerning Liturgies, and their Imposition"(1662); "Works", XV., 14-15, 53-55.
  25. "Animadversions on a Treatise entitled 'Fiat Lux'", XIV., 124; "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'", XIV., 453.
  26. "Theologumena Pantodapa"; "Works", XVII.
  27. Quoted by Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II., 880-881.
  28. H.G.Wood, Art. on "Puritanism" (E.R.E.).
  29. "Animadversions on a Treatise entitled 'Fiat Lux'", XIV., 128.
  30. Ibid., 136, 141
  31. "Of Schism: the True Nature of it discovered and considered with reference to the Present Differences in Religion."(1657). "Works", XIII., 108.
  32. Ibid., 181.
  33. Cawdrey, "Independency a great Schism", 159, 200.
  34. Cawdrey, "Independency further proved to be a Schism", 30-31, 43-44
  35. "A Review of the True Nature of Schism, with a Vindication of the Congregational Churches in England from the Imputation thereof" (1657). "Works", XIII., 267.
  36. Ibid., 274.
  37. "An Answer to a Late Treatise of Mr. Cawdrey about the Nature of Schism"(1658). "Works", XIII., 284, 286.
  38. "A Brief Vindication of the Nonconformists from the Charge of Schism"(1680). "Works", XIII., 313.
  39. "A Discourse concerning Evangelical Love, Church Peace, and Unity; with the Occasions and Reasons of the Present Differences and Divisions about Things Sacred and Religious." "Works", XV., 166ff.
  40. "Exercitations concerning the Name, Original, Nature, Use and Continuance of Sacred Rest". "Works", XIX., 439.
  41. Ibid., 263-264, 269.
  42. "A Brief Vindication of the Nonconformists from the Charge of Schism"; "Works", XIII., 314.
  43. Ibid., 328. Cf. "An Answer unto Two Questions: with Twelve Arguments against any Conformity to Worship not of Divine Institution"; "Works", XVI., 241-248. (Published posthumously, 1720).
  44. "A Brief Vindication of the Nonconformists from the Charge of Schism"; "Works", XIII., 336.
  45. Ibid., 328ff.
  46. "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'", "Works", XIV., 257-263.
  47. "Animadversions on a Treatise entitled 'Fiat Lux'", "Works", XIV., 22.

48. Ibid., 102; "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'", "Works", XIV., 393ff.
  49. Ibid., 330.
  50. "Animadversions on a Treatise entitled 'Fiat Lux'", "Works", XIV., 27.
  51. "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'", "Works", XIV., 221.
  52. Ibid., 225-237.
  53. Ibid., 254.
  54. Ibid., 335.
  55. "The True Nature of a Gospel Church and its Government"; "Works", XVI., 197-199.
  56. Goold's Prefaratory Note; "Works", XVI., 2.
  57. Trevelyan, "England under the Stuarts", 343.
  58. Jordan, "The Development of Religious Toleration in England (1640-1660)", 252.
  59. Ibid., 317.
  60. "An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's Book of the Unreasonableness of Separation; in Defence of the Vindication of Nonconformists from the Guilt of Schism"; "Works", XV., 433.
  61. Ante, 22.
  62. Powicke, "Baxter under the Cross", 274-275; "Life of Baxter", 275ff.; "Reliquiae Baxterianae", III., 62ff.
  63. Powicke, "A Life of the Revd. Richard Baxter", 277.
  64. Powicke, "Baxter under the Cross", 203-205. "Apparently, writes Powicke, 'it did not emerge in 1668, but Owen must have been aware of his own disagreement with Baxter about it.'"
  - 65a. Owen's position may be compared with the policy of Queen Elizabeth as declared in the "Declaration of the Queen's Proceedings" (c. Jan. 1570). "She assured her Catholic subjects that the Government had no intention that any of its subjects should be molested either by 'examination or inquisition in any matter, either of faith, as long as they shall profess the Christian faith, not gainsaying the authority of the holy Scriptures (and of) the articles of faith contained in the creeds (Apostolic and Catholic)...." (See Jordan, "The Development of Religious Toleration in England", I., 123.) Many previous attempts had been made to reduce Christianity into its simplest elements. (Cf. Ibid., 124, Footnote I)
  65. Powicke, "Baxter under the Cross", 203.
  66. Powicke, "The Life of the Revd. Richard Baxter", 163.
  67. Ante, 69.
  68. Freund, "Die Idee der Toleranz im England der Grossen Revolution", 119.
  69. Streeter, "The Primitive Church", viii, ix.
  70. H. G. Wood, Art. on "Puritanism" (E. R. E.).
  71. Curtis, Art. on "Confession" (E. R. E.).
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Chapter 4. - THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TOLERATION FOR CHURCH AND STATE.

The word "toleration" signifies the legal right of individuals or groups to exercise freedom of belief and action and to declare their beliefs publicly. Only after a severe struggle which lasted for many years was religious toleration finally established in Britain. During the greater part of the seventeenth century the whole question was constantly under discussion; Owen frequently alluded to it, and wrote many tracts and treatises on the subject. Nevertheless he made no outstanding contribution to the solution of the problem. His opinions are mainly of interest because they represent the standpoint of the conservative Independents or the Congregationalists of the period. It is true that he expressed principles which, if logically applied, would have made complete toleration an established fact; but these were balanced by others which advocated the curbing of heretical ideas. His works therefore contain no consistent scheme of thought, with the result that his leadership was timorous and inconsistent. His main arguments can with advantage be divided into two groups: (a) those which advocate complete religious freedom, and (b) those which imply that toleration should only be applied within certain specific limits.

A. - Arguments for Toleration.

(1). The right of private judgment. Belief in the right of private judgment was one of the basic ideas of Protestantism. In Puritanism it took the form of confidence in God's personal revelation of Himself to the believer, who thereby acquired power to judge in matters of faith. As a Puritan Owen held that the State should respect the believer's personal freedom, and that variety of opinion within the framework of Christianity was to be expected.

Many of his contemporaries still adhered to the Calvinistic maxim, that God was glorified through man's submission of his own will to the divine Will, whether that submission was free or forced. Such a view was presented by Cawdrey, a typical Presbyterian, who claimed that to enforce conformity was "only a just prosecution of evil and refractory rebels to the Kingdom of Christ".(1). But Owen presented the Free Church modification of the Calvinistic doctrine, maintaining that only the individual's free response to the message of Revelation was acceptable in the sight of God. He did not grudge to his opponents the toleration which enabled them to offer religious worship in their own fashion.(2). He firmly believed that -

"the truth contained in the Word of God was readily ascertainable, and that the individual Christian constituted, because of his immediate relationship with God, a higher court in matters of faith than Parliaments and Ecclesiastical Commissions." (3).

In the last resort, says Owen, the believer's guide is his own conscience, that is, "the judgment that a man maketh of himself and his actions with reference to the future judgment of God."(4).

This view involved him in several controversies, of which the one with Samuel Parker may be chosen as a typical example. Parker, whose arguments remind us of Thomas More's "Dialogue", is described by Burnet as "the most virulent of all that writ against the sects." (5). He urged that Nonconformist principles were inconsistent with the aims of government, and that the Dissenters had no valid excuse for refusing to co-operate with the Established Church; that it was particularly futile on their part to appeal to conscience in order to avoid submitting to the demands of the State. Conscience might be recognised as the supreme arbitrator in all cases where its dictates were clear, but its "pretensions" to claim unlimited authority over human life disturbed governments more than any other

force in the world. No government could afford to allow each man to do what he supposed was commanded by conscience, for it was on grounds such as these that rebels, regicides, and heretics, sought to justify their actions. Peace and security could only be secured by making religion subject to the reigning sovereign. If the king could enforce moral laws, he could also impose ritual. Parker contended that the existence of different sects within a commonwealth led to public disturbance - religious factions being the most seditious - and therefore it was necessary that uniformity should be achieved at all costs. Those who still felt after its establishment that they had been compelled to do what was contrary to the will of God might cast the responsibility upon the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.(6)

In his answer Owen granted that the magistrate ought to make it possible for his subjects to receive adequate religious instruction, and that under ordinary circumstances subjects should obey their ruler. But he insisted that exceptions ought to be made whenever the magistrate commanded men to do what was contrary to divine injunctions. Conscience was the supreme authority in religious matters, for it alone could recognise the voice of God, and each man would ultimately be judged in the light of his fidelity to its dictates. The very nature of religion presupposed freedom of choice and debarred coercion, so that the State had no alternative but to pursue a policy of religious toleration. Even questions concerning forms of church government ought to be decided by the individual himself, for one day he would be judged in the light of his decisions.

"Suppose the magistrate command such things in religion as a man in his conscience, guided by the Word and respecting God, doth look upon as unlawful and such as are evil, and sin unto him if he should perform them, and forbid such things in the worship of God as he esteems himself obliged in conscience to observe as commands of Christ; if he practise the things so commanded, and omit the things so forbidden, I fear he will find

himself within doors continually at confession, saying, with trouble enough, 'I have done those things which I ought not to have done, and I have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and there is no health in me.'"(7).

Few in Owen's day were prepared to go so far as to say that the nature of religion required complete toleration. The majority of the members of the Long Parliament, for instance, were only ready to tolerate Calvinistic communions, though some of them, mostly Independents, would have willingly granted religious liberty to Baptists, Socinians, Arminians, Jews, and Mohammedans. Those who held the latter view argued that religion was a purely personal and spiritual relationship between man and his Creator, and they believed that external forms and ceremonies were indifferent matters. Milton and Cromwell, in company with others, held such opinions. The great protector affirmed that freedom of conscience was man's natural birthright, and he only allowed political considerations to set limits to his broad and comprehensive religious policy. Yet even Cromwell was led by his belief in the Christian nature of the State to give his support to the formation of a State Church. Only the Baptists, the Quakers, and Roger Williams were prepared in those days to admit all denominations to equal rights. (8). Owen himself was prevented from advocating complete toleration both by his conception of 'exclusive truth' and by his idea of the Christian character of the civil power.

(2) The nature of Truth. Owen possessed the child-like faith of the Reformers in the power of Truth to overcome error. He frequently affirms that there ought to be no coercion in religious matters, that the Gospel should be allowed free scope to make its appeal to individuals, because, if there were no interference with the believer's personal judgment, Truth would ultimately be sure to

prevail. On the strength of this conviction he supported the Pinner Hall scheme of lectures.(9). He urges that the whole machinery of persecution is based on error, superstition, and consciousness of weakness (10), but the Truth of the Gospel flourishes wherever freedom of conscience is allowed.(11).

Most of his contemporaries rejected this view. Their general attitude was exemplified by Richard Perrinchief, one of Owen's opponents, who affirmed that Christian princes had always found it necessary to safeguard the peace of their realms by preserving religious unity. This policy was supported by the Gospel itself, for by proclaiming failure to apprehend Truth to be sinful it implied that all men possessed the same kind, if not the same degree, of power to assimilate it. A variety of opinions could therefore on no account be tolerated. Christ also had commanded His disciples to preserve unity among themselves, and Christians might use any available means in order to render Him obedience. (12).

But according to Owen entirely different conclusions ought to be drawn from history. He indicated how error tended to disappear wherever freedom of conscience was granted. During the first centuries of the Christian era, for instance, error in the form of heresy did not exist because in those days believers enjoyed freedom within their own circle. Heresies, however, immediately appeared after the Church had obtained control over the civil power, and tried to exercise her sovereignty to secure uniformity.(13). Facts such as these proved that the Gospel could only be propagated by spiritual means. This consideration led Owen in later years to adopt a more charitable attitude even towards the Roman Catholics, and he frequently deplored that the Papists themselves had set such an evil example to the contrary. His point of view is clearly expressed in the following paragraph:-

"The will of God must be done in the ways of His own appointment. Outward force and violence, corporeal punishments, swords and fagots, as to any use in things purely spiritual and religious, to impose them on the consciences of men, are condemned in the Scriptures, by all the ancient or first writers of the Church, by sundry edicts and laws of empire, and are contrary to the very light of reason whereby we are men, and all the principles of it from whence mankind consenteth and coalesceth into civil society. Explaining, declaring, proving, and confirming the truth, convincing of gainsayers by the evidence of common principles on all hands assented unto, and right reason, with prayer and supplications for success, attended with a conversation becoming the Gospel we profess, is the way sanctified by God unto the promotion of the truth, and the recovery of them that are gone astray from it."(14).

Hence the civil authorities, though it was their duty to maintain peace and order, ought not to employ the power entrusted to them for the purpose of suppressing heresy. Such practices were derived from pagan sources, and were contrary to the genius of Christianity.(15). So long as the Word was tolerated and allowed free scope to exercise its appeal, it would not require the support of unstable parliamentary laws (16). Such laws actually had the contrary effect since compulsion, being unable to convince men of the Truth, gave rise to discontent and rebellion. It may be noted that Owen, in so far as he stressed the spiritual nature of Truth, and its ability to defend and propagate itself without the aid of material forces, approached what Jordan calls "philosophical toleration", which -

"presumes a positive attitude of mind which enables us charitably and sympathetically to hear another man whom we consider to be in error ... This point of view rests its case upon the power of truth to overcome error by the weight of its own virtue." (17).

(3) The teaching of Scripture. He frequently appeals to Scripture for confirmation of his views on toleration. He says that the Bible does not sanction persecution, that God has never authorised the magistrate to interfere with the religion of peaceful and orderly citizens:



"Gospel constitutions in the case of heresy or error seem not to favour any course of violence, - I mean, of civil penalties. Foretold it is that heresies must be, 1 Cor. xi., 19; but this for the manifesting of those that are approved, not the destroying of those that are not; ... Admonitions, and excommunications upon rejection of admonition, are the highest constitutions (I suppose) against such persons ... Perhaps those who call for the sword on earth are as unacquainted with their own spirits as those that called for fire from heaven, Luke ix., 54. And perhaps the parable of the tares gives in a positive rule as to this whole business." (18).

According to Scripture, the Kingdom shall not come by human efforts, for its establishment is a divine prerogative. God Himself will establish it through -

"the glorious manifestation of His own power, and that by His Spirit subduing the souls of men unto it; - not by the sword of men setting up a few to rule over others. Hence, it is everywhere called a creating of 'new heavens, and a new earth', Isa. lxx., 17, - a work, doubtless, too difficult for the worms of the earth to undertake." (19).

His appeal to the authority of Scripture is the more significant because for generations the defenders of persecution had believed that they could support their views by appealing to the Mosaic Law as interpreted by 'orthodox' theologians, and even he held that Old Testament precepts, when divested of their national garb, expressed ethical principles that were eternally valid:

"There is something moral in those institutions, which, being unclothed of their Judaical form, is still binding to all in the like kind, as to some analogy and proportion." (20)

But on this question the Bible only declared that it was the duty of the magistrate to protect his subjects from the enemies of society, to execute God's designs against the wicked, and to ensure "that the worshippers of God in Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." (21). Neither persecution nor toleration was specifically sanctioned by Scripture; but since toleration was a negative principle (implying the absence of persecution) commended by conscience, it ought to be practised.

Here he evidently appeals to the Calvinistic belief, that negative

principles not specifically enjoined by Scripture, but commended by conscience, should be observed.(22).

Nevertheless, Owen did not extricate himself completely from the fetters of the old biblical arguments for persecution which were still employed in his day by the opponents of toleration. His whole teaching on the subject is "marred by a kind of vague evasion".<sup>(23)</sup> Sometimes he said that even idolatry and blasphemy should not be physically punished; at other times he recommended the vigorous employment of such means for their suppression, quoting unrevoked Old Testament injunctions to support his views.(24). But on the whole he seems to have modified his ideas according to the type of error which he had in mind: he thought that the infliction of the severest penalties upon a man like Servetus was sanctioned by Scripture, but that there was no divine injunction that supported the persecution of the Nonconformists by the post-Restoration authorities. He was convinced that Christ would never have employed such measures to suppress Nonconformity, since they produced "a frame of heart" that was entirely out of harmony with what He desired. Under no circumstances would He have punished those who sincerely professed to obey Him:

"'Coerce, fine, imprison, banish those that apprehend not aright all and every thing that I would have them instructed in', are words that never proceeded out of His holy mouth, - things that never entered into His gracious heart." (25).

Considerations such as these led him to warn the New England Congregationalists that their persecution of Baptists and Quakers was unwarrantable and contrary to the Word of God.(26). The fact that conclusions such as these could be drawn from Scripture did much to ensure the development of belief in the moral and spiritual value of toleration.

(4) Disagreement on non-fundamental questions does not justify persecution. The Reformers, although they believed that they were in possession of exclusive truth, had unwittingly prepared the way for the establishment of religious toleration by creating the absurd spectacle of a number of theological and ecclesiastical systems, each claiming a monopoly of truth. All such claims obviously could not be granted, so that toleration sooner or later was bound to become a matter of intellectual necessity and of practical expediency. The most outstanding exponents of the doctrine that all religious opinions, forms, and practices, had merely relative worth, were the Spiritual Reformers and the Mystics. This view is occasionally expressed in some of Owen's early compositions. More than once he expressed doubts as to the possibility of obtaining exact definitions of 'Truth', or of discovering a perfect form of Church government. In 1646 he wrote:

"I know no church government in the world already established amongst any sort of men, of the truth and necessity whereof I am convinced in all particulars."(27).

Two years later he affirmed that the same uncertainty existed when efforts were made to determine the nature of heresy, for what some regarded as heresy others considered to be orthodox. When Protestants stooped to persecute heretics they descended to the same level as the Roman Catholics:

"We use no other arguments, cite no other texts, press no other consequences for the punishing of other heretics, than the Papists, the wisest heretics breathing, do for the punishment of us." (28).

In the absence of fixed criteria to determine questions of this character, all persecutions were of necessity governed by motives of expediency and prejudice. The plain truth, affirms Owen, is this:

"I never knew one contend earnestly for a toleration of dissenters, but was so himself; nor any for their suppression, but were themselves of the persuasion which prevailed."(29).

Such statements led Freund to draw the following conclusion:

"Ein wesentliches Motiv für die Duldungsidee Owens ist die Erkenntnis der inneren Unsicherheit in religiösen Dingen."(30).

This, however, only applies to his early works. In later years he came to have stronger convictions regarding the "fundamentals" of the faith, the absolute character of Truth, the divine origin of Congregationalism, etc., which caused him correspondingly to shift the ground of his belief in toleration.

But to the end he held that questions concerning ecclesiastical polity and forms of worship did not belong to the essentials of faith, and it was for this reason that he believed it possible for a number of sects to co-exist in the same Commonwealth. Many of his critics took advantage of this. Perrinchief, for example, retorted that if these matters were not of fundamental importance, dissent on account of disagreements concerning them was unjustifiable and schismatic, and it was legitimate to employ coercive measures in order to restore ecclesiastical unity.(31). With this Owen, however, would not agree. He argued that although these issues were not fundamental, yet they were sufficiently significant to make Nonconformity unavoidable. He himself was prepared to defend Congregationalism to the bitter end, and neither the hope of preferment in the Established Church, nor the prospect of respite from persecution, during the years which followed the Restoration, could induce him to surrender its distinctive tenets. (32). Nothing could shake his belief in the divine origin of the ecclesiastical system which he had adopted:

"Whatever is ours, whatever is in our power, whatever God hath intrusted us with the disposal of, we willingly resign and give up to the will and commands of our superiors; but as to our minds and consciences in the things of His worship and service, He hath reserved the sovereignty of them unto Himself. To Him must we give an account of them at the great day."(33).

In spite of this he was ready to allow a number of communions, which differed in their views concerning church polity and forms of worship, to exist together in any country so long as they tolerated one another in virtue of their common Christianity. He disliked bigotry, and it was characteristic of him to advise Parliament - as he did in the sermon which he preached before the House on the day after the decapitation of Charles I - to avoid the paths trodden by their predecessors:

"Turn not to the ways of such as the Lord hath blasted before your eyes ... Oppression, self-seeking, contrivances for persecution." (34).

He believed that every Christian ought to be allowed to choose the church or sect with which he desired to join. He left the Anglican Church at an early age because of Laud's persistent attempts to curtail the liberty of believers by regulating the government, worship, and discipline, of the Church. He violently disliked the Court of High Commission and the practice of metropolitanical visitation. For a short time he was a Presbyterian; but he soon left that body because of the bigotry of its members, and he became a Congregationalist. He took these steps because he believed so firmly in the freedom of the individual Christian and in the need for toleration. Cromwell's victory over Scotland was for him a cause for much rejoicing, for he believed that God had thereby providentially thwarted the desire of the Scots to impose their ecclesiastical scheme upon others.(35).

"Those who would have been our oppressors in Scotland, but that God hath crushed the cockatrice in the shell, and filled the pit with their dead bodies which they have digged for us, - they also had prepared a Procrustes' bed, a heavy yoke, a beast that, had it grown to perfection, would have had horns and hoofs!" (36).

When he was Vice-chancellor of Oxford University he put his doctrine into practice by willingly co-operating with both Anglicans and Presbyterians. Although the ordinance of 9th.May,1644, demanded

"the removal from churches and the destruction of all organs", the "double organ" retained its old place at Magdalen Chapel, while the chapel itself, says Evelyn, was kept "in pontifical order, the altar only, I think, turned tablewise."(37). Three hundred of those who used the Anglican liturgy were allowed to meet every Sunday near his own door at a time when they were not legally tolerated(38). It is also worth observing that he wrote the following paragraph some years after he had left Oxford:-

"I do believe that many that have used that book (the Book of Common Prayer) in the public administrations have been as loyal to Christ, had as much communion with God, and been as zealous to promote the interest of the Gospel, as any who have lived in the world these thousand years." (39).

He displayed the same charitable spirit towards the Presbyterians, with many of whom he was on terms of intimacy and even of friendship, and to whom he gave most of the vacant benefices at his disposal when he held the vice-chancellorship.(40). He was a sympathetic and considerate member of Cromwell's Board of Triers, and to his lasting credit he successfully defended Dr. Pococke, the great English orientalist of those days, against the absurd charge of "insufficiency".(41).

Believing, therefore, that matters pertaining to Church government and external forms of worship did not belong to the 'fundamentals' of Christianity, he opposed coercive attempts at securing uniformity, and was able to appreciate the Christian qualities of many believers who disagreed with him on these issues. After the Restoration he frequently affirmed that these questions after all were only of relative importance, and that the civil power, accordingly, had no right to persecute those who were unable, for conscientious reasons, to conform with all the customs observed by the Anglican Church.

(5) The Church ought to be independent of the State. The Baptists were among the first to demand toleration because they desired to be independent of the civil authorities. This idea was taken over by the Puritans, who continually tried to drive a wedge between Church and State, and whose valiant efforts to free the Church from the stranglehold of despotism challenged the ambition of the secular powers to employ the results gained through the Reformation for their own ends.(42). The Independents and the Congregationalists were particularly persistent in their attempts to limit the authority of the State in spiritual affairs. In this way they made a most valuable contribution to the cause of toleration, and even the Restoration did not eclipse the results which they achieved.(43).

John Owen, as we have noted, had no sympathy with the idea of employing the State to reduce Britain into a condition of uniformity. We saw in the last chapter that he conceived of a Christian church as a local institution, the members of which voluntarily congregated together to worship and to obey God. This implied that the sovereign autonomy of local congregations should be respected, and that the inviolability of the Christian conscience should be recognised. His doctrine of the Church demanded that the Christian community of believers should be independent of the State. Its direct effect was to loosen the ties which hitherto had bound the secular and spiritual authorities. The history of Roman Catholicism illustrates how ecclesiastical centralisation of authority encourages mutual interference on the part of both State and Church, whereas the rise of sectarianism shows that the confinement of authority to small local congregations has the contrary effect. Churches of the kind conceived by Owen were not interested in worldly power, nor were they guided by secular ambitions. This removed the motive to

persecution which always exists when powerful ecclesiastical organizations strive to retain their own material interests, or to endanger those of others. In practice the disposition to exclude the State from spiritual affairs would entail the adoption of complete toleration.

Owen maintains that the magistrate has no authority to persecute his subjects on merely religious grounds because spiritual errors cannot be defined or discovered in the same way as civil crimes, and the State as such is by nature incapable of creating that miraculous relationship between God and man which constitutes the essence of religion. The authority of the Church is founded upon revelation and recognised by conscience, while the authority of the State is established upon entirely different bases. Hence the latter has no right to interfere in ecclesiastical affairs. We must grant that -

"it hath pleased God so to order things in this kingdom, that the work of recovering His worship to its purity, and restoring the civil state to its liberty, should be both carried on at the same time by the same persons."(44).

But this is not due to any essential affinity between the two spheres. The State cannot pass judgment on doctrine, church government, and worship, because it has no criteria available for this purpose. Such matters can only be determined by the Church. Hence the State has no alternative but to pursue a tolerant policy with regard to religious affairs. The civil authority has only the right to punish evil-doers in order to preserve sociological cohesion, and to control offences which "by a disorderly eruption, pervert the course of public quiet and society."(45). This obviously has nothing to do with the Church as an organization:

"The defence and protection of erring persons from violence and injury, in those things wherein they have a right, is no acting of his (the magistrate's) duty about religious things, but a



mere dealing for the preservation of human society, by the defence of persons not acting against the rules thereof." (46).

After the Restoration he was much grieved by the efforts which were made to employ the ecclesiastical weapon of excommunication for the purpose of destroying Nonconformity. The Calvinistic doctrine which he, like all the Puritans, accepted, originally emanated from Anabaptist sources, whence it filtered into Calvinism through Bucer and the Strassburg Reformers. It affirmed that the sole purpose of excommunication was to aid the Church to maintain a strict moral supervision over her members, that it should only be employed for the purpose of sanctification, punishment, and education.(47). From the days of Queen Elizabeth, however, it had been used for political ends, - a practice that became still more prevalent during the reign of Charles II. In 1681, for instance, the Lord Mayor of London, the Aldermen, and the Justices, issued an order requesting the Lord Bishop of London -

"to direct those officers which are under his ~~charge~~ jurisdiction to use their utmost diligence that all such persons may be excommunicated who commit crimes deserving the ecclesiastical censure."(48).

This was considered by Owen to be nothing less than sacrilege. He protested that not only did the Nonconformists never deserve such treatment, but that the use made of excommunication was contrary to Christ's explicit commands. No person, he urged, ought to be debarred from enjoying the privileges of Church worship without full acknowledgment of Christ's supreme authority, combined with a sense of sorrow that one had been severed from his "body". Certainly there was no justification for administering ecclesiastical censures "with laughter, indignation, and confusion."(49). In these things, says Owen, the gross waywardness of the Established Church is fully manifested. While she persecutes peaceful and useful citizens such as

the Nonconformists, who in doctrine and worship conform with the principles and practices observed by the catholic Church in all ages, others who are "ignorant, profane, haters of godliness, and openly wicked in their lives, are allowed in the full communion of the church, without any disciplinary admonition or control!"(50). Since excommunication is essentially a spiritual weapon, it should only be used for the spiritual advancement of Truth, and to safeguard the honour and purity of the Church.

(6) The appeal to secular motives. Secular motives in increasing measure had dominated the religious policy of the British government during the Elizabethan period. On account of the ability and wealth of religious minorities, and the great diversity of opinions which then prevailed, the authorities deemed it expedient to avoid using coercive measures in religious matters lest they might incite rebellion and civil war. Hence they adopted a policy of broad comprehension from which only the Roman Catholics, as political enemies, were excluded. But the Nonconformists knew that they could be tolerated only so long as they confined their interests to purely spiritual issues; ~~but~~ if they were politically harmless the State would realise the material advantages of granting them freedom of worship. For this reason the beneficent results of toleration were frequently mentioned in those days to incite the British to follow Dutch example. Moreover, the government was beginning to realise the wisdom of adopting a policy that could be precisely defined and adequately defended, because henceforward the printing-press could be used for explaining the standpoint of the persecuted to the masses. (51).

On the whole it is true of the Elizabethan period that punishments for ecclesiastical offences were only inflicted in so far as they were deemed conducive to the well-being of the State. (52). Ultimately the advent into political life of secular and utilitarian ideals was to complete the tendency to separate the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and this in turn necessarily gave a powerful impetus to the cause of toleration. By the year 1660 the theory of toleration had been completely developed: reason and history had persuaded intelligent men of its necessity, even if they foresaw that its practical application might be followed by certain unpleasant results. After that date the question was regarded as mainly a matter for political discussion, and its removal to the political sphere contributed much towards the adoption of a limited toleration within the fabric of the British constitution.(53). These forces, however, did not exercise their full influence upon public thought until the eighteenth century. John Owen, therefore, lived during the period of transition. Secularism had already done much to destroy the 'Corpus Christianum', and it is no matter for surprise to discover that after the Restoration Owen decided to appeal to political considerations and economic facts in order to gain a hearing for himself.

Those who took over the reins of government at the Restoration naturally regarded the Nonconformists as the representatives of the forces which, in the preceding decades, had overthrown the constitution and beheaded the king; and Owen was among those who perceived the need for removing their fears before there would be any hope of toleration for those who dissented from the Established Church. His aim was to show that

Protestant Dissenters had no desire to overthrow the constitution, that on the contrary they acknowledged the king's sovereignty, and were prepared to assist him in all legal matters pertaining to the administration of government.(54). He said that it was ridiculous to suppose that toleration would encourage sedition; rather it would have the contrary effect of encouraging those who received such a boon to express their gratitude by serving king and parliament to the best of their ability, and any residue of danger could be removed by constantly inspecting Nonconformist meetings:

"There lies a ready security against the pretended fears of the contrivance of sedition in assemblies of men, women, and children, strangers to one another in a great measure, by commanding all meetings to be disposed in such a way as that they may be exposed to all, and be under the constant inspection of authority."(55).

Like the Politiques Owen insisted that civil loyalty was distinct from religious belief. No man ought to be punished on account of his religion. Such a policy might indeed prove dangerous, for it promoted rebellion and hypocrisy. An exception, however, ought to be made in the case of Roman Catholics, whose doctrines tended to subvert monarchical governments.(56). No State could tolerate the Roman Church unless she repudiated her belief in the pope's sovereignty and his claim to have the right of excommunicating heretical rulers:

"Popish religion, warming in its very bowels a fatal engine against all magistracy amongst us, cannot upon our concessions plead for forbearance; it being a known and received maxim, that the Gospel of Christ clashes against no righteous ordinance of man."(57).

There was a growing tendency at this time to employ economic arguments for toleration. These were first expressed in a convincing form by the Baptists, whose views were shaped under the guidance of prosperous laymen while they were in exile upon

Dutch soil.(58). Their appearance, as Clark observes, proves the existence of "a secularizing tendency, a tendency to regard material values as more real than those which were less tangible".<sup>(59)</sup> Those who paid no heed to them were already behind the times. By using them Owen hoped to persuade worldly-minded statesmen to show more leniency towards Dissenters. He urged that history clearly indicated how hardships, economic distress, and civil strife, were the invariable results of intolerance.

The situation became very acute for the Nonconformists in 1670, when stringent clauses were added to the "Act against Seditious Conventicles". Owen thought that the following clause was particularly insidious:-

"Any justice of the peace, on the oath of two witnesses, or any other sufficient proof, may record the offence under his hand and zeal; which record shall be taken in law for a full and perfect conviction."(60).

He pointed out that Nonconformists were thus denied even the right of self-defence, and the Act was therefore contrary to Scripture, Natural Law, and the practice of other nations. It also caused peaceful citizens to lose confidence in the security of their goods, by allowing unprincipled persons to gratify their lusts by depriving others of their rightful possessions. Many of the informers were indeed so disreputable that legally they ought not to be tolerated as witnesses. It was true that a right of appeal was granted, but this had little practical value because, once a man had lost his possessions, he could undertake no further proceedings.(61). Under these circumstances trade was bound to suffer. In a paper which he presented before the House of Lords he pleaded that the bulk of the ministers had already been reduced to poverty, so that the penalties imposed by the Bill

against Conventicles would have to be borne by others who possessed sufficient means, -

"merchants, clothiers, operators in our own manufactures, and occupants of land, with the like furtherers and promoters of trade."(62).

This incited Nonconformists to place their property beyond the reach of the law, and commercial agreements could not be made when the ruin of one of the parties concerned was imminently possible. Moreover, many innocent persons would also suffer on account of their connections with those whom this law condemned. But in spite of his efforts to prove that the coercive policy of the government caused serious injury to British trade and commerce (63), his representations proved unsuccessful, and many dissenting families were ruined. His opinions were held by many of his contemporaries, as Trevelyan indicates:-

"Dissent was strong among the merchants and shopkeepers; indeed the injury done to trade by the ruin and terror spread among them under the Clarendon Code became a stock argument for toleration."(64).

#### B. - Arguments for limiting Toleration.

The logical extension of most of the above arguments would have excluded all State interference in religious affairs; but these were counterbalanced by others which in practice led him to oppose the application of toleration beyond certain limits, - the result being that he always appears to be taking away with one hand what he had already bestowed with the other. We shall now consider the two major principles which prevented him from becoming an advocate of complete religious freedom.

(1) The idea of a Christian society. Melancthon's conception of the 'Corpus Christianum' has its parallel in Puritan thought, which regarded heresy as a breach of social unity to be punished

by the State. The Puritans disliked mass enthusiasm with its tendency to disregard authority, and to break the bonds of ecclesiastical discipline. In this respect Owen remained faithful to the Puritan tradition, so that as soon as a measure of religious freedom was achieved under Cromwell the precariousness of his devotion to the cause of toleration became manifest. As a representative of the conservative wing of Independency he was then anxious to break the alliance with the extremists, and to erect a national Church based upon a broad Calvinistic foundation. Thus he had more in common with moderate Presbyterians than with Independent extremists. This was very evident by the year 1658, when the Savoy Conference met to formulate a Confession of Faith for the Congregational churches. Owen's party had then -

"gained the mantle of respectability, it was now beginning to display the normal psychological attributes of a dominant religious party."(65).

Owen's ideal was that of a Christian society bound together by doctrinal orthodoxy, in which serious departure from the Truth would be duly punished for the protection of its members. It was the duty of the State, he said, to protect its subjects from spiritual contamination by suppressing heresy.

The mediaeval idea - that the State ought to be guided by religious zeal under the direction of the Church, and that the civil power was responsible to God for its actions, - was not rejected by Protestants. For many years Calvinism remained impervious to those influences which sought to separate the religious and civil authorities; its "comprehensive sociological fundamental theory" was - that "the Church works with the State in the spirit of a common obedience to the Word of God."(66). Owen inherited from Calvinism the notion that it was the duty of

the State to encourage and protect Christianity. The Genevan theocratic conception of the State strongly appealed to him:

"The great promise of Christ is, that in these latter days of the world He will lay the nations in a subserviency to Him, - the kingdoms of the world shall become His; that is, act as kingdoms and governments no longer against Him, but for Him."(67).

He firmly believed that the magistrate who neglected religion would speedily lose the divine guidance. Nevertheless, while stressing the Christian duties of the State he held that Church and State should each retain its own distinctive character and functions. This independence ought not to produce rivalry between them, since both were guided by the divine Word operating through Scripture.

Our author, however, attributed many ecclesiastical duties to the civil authorities. It was the magistrate's duty to defend and to propagate the faith.(68). To him was allocated the task of preventing "public scandal, national demerit, and reproach to the profession of the Gospel" from being expressed either in public meetings or through the agency of the press.(69). During the Commonwealth Owen stated that God had linked His own interests with those of Parliament, and that accordingly He would use the magistrates to evangelise the land.(70). The secular powers were willed by God, who was Himself present within them. Even after the Restoration he argued from Scripture, the nature of the royal office, and the laws of the realm, that certain ecclesiastical rights and duties belonged to the king.(71).

The difficulty of harmonising statements such as these with the other view expressed by him (see p.94) - that the State is by nature incapable of passing judgment on religious questions, or of deciding which of many existing ecclesiastical institutions



possesses the Truth - has already been noted by Freund.(72). Here he reflects the general inconsistency which pervades the whole Puritan attitude towards the problem of toleration. He paid lip-service to the absolute efficacy of Scripture and of preaching to secure a converted people, but in practice he felt that the reformation needed was too urgent to allow it to depend solely upon the use of spiritual means. He also supposed (like the majority of Puritans) that the Will of God was clear and distinct, and that the State had the right to execute it and to preserve the purity of the Church. He frequently appears to regard heresy as a breach of social unity punishable by Natural Law, so that his views were not much more advanced than those of Melanchthon and the Reformers. He believed that the State should tolerate Truth and suppress falsehood, and it was this that caused him to support the punishment of John Biddle. His views conformed with those of Puritanism in general:

"Puritan thought . . . was disposed to exclude the civil powers from any interference in spiritual affairs. Had it not been for the related disposition to view the secular arm as the executor of religious policy, Puritan theory might have enunciated a complete distinction between civil and spiritual functions which would have embraced the idea of religious toleration."(73).

(2) The absolute nature of Truth. His support of toleration was strictly limited by his absolutist conception of Truth, his stress on doctrinal orthodoxy. On the whole it is true of Owen as of the Reformers that he cared far more for Truth than for freedom. He abhorred religious licence, which he thought would be encouraged if complete liberty of worship were granted. On one occasion he charged two female Quakers, who had disturbed a public service at Oxford, with blaspheming the divine Name and abusing the divine Spirit, and as a result they were "whipped

soundly".(74). Though he regarded the Church as a voluntary society he conceived of her theologically as an objective institution which possessed in the Scriptures the treasury of Grace and Salvation. The Church was brought into being through the Word. He believed that the Bible interpreted according to Calvinistic maxims ought to be recognised as her supreme authority on faith and practice.

These considerations impelled him to invent a scheme for establishing a national Church surrounded by bodies of tolerated dissent. The origin of this idea may be traced to the trouble that arose through the publication of Biddle's English translation of the "Racovian Catechism" in 1652, which led Owen and other leading ministers to lodge complaints before Parliament and to appeal for the establishment of religion upon a sounder basis. The committee chosen by Parliament to investigate the case "included several of the greatest of the Independent leaders and may be regarded as fairly representative of Congregational thought during this period."(75). It suggested that two commissions should be formed, each composed of lay and clerical members: one was authorised to supervise the ministry and to ensure that suitable candidates were ordained, the other empowered to visit, discipline, and eject the clergy. Gardiner affirms that the proposals "indubitably bear the stamp of Owen's mind", and that the system of Triers and Ejectors, which was subsequently established under the Protectorate, was "in reality the work of John Owen".(76). The established Church was to enjoy all the financial and other privileges of a national Church, but permission was extended to those who were unwilling to conform to hold private meetings, provided they assembled in a public

place or gave due notice to the magistrate.

Jordan believes that these proposals were "the most tolerant recommendation seriously set forth thus far in the seventeenth century by a responsible body in England".(77). A few like Major Butler thought that the scheme would endanger religious liberty, and many voiced their dissatisfaction with the fourteenth proposal, viz. -

"That such as do not receive, but oppose, those principles of the Christian religion without acknowledgment of which the Scriptures do clearly and plainly affirm .... may not be suffered to preach or promulgate in opposition to such principles."(78).

This proposal evidently was aimed primarily at the Socinians; but it was soon realised that it could not<sup>be</sup> applied in practice unless the "fundamentals" of Christian faith were defined. This delicate task was assigned to Owen and fourteen other divines, - a committee that was composed of moderate Presbyterians and conservative Independents. Unfortunately, however, it committed the blunder of drawing out a list of twenty doctrinal points, which they declared to be the "fundamentals" of Christianity. Powicke rightly observes that this is "a striking illustration of the theological foolishness that deems itself wisdom."(79). Richard Baxter, who was a member of the committee, attributed the bulk of the work to Dr. Owen, "the great man" who was himself "under the baleful influence of Dr. Cheynell". His own suggestion - that the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Decalogue, would provide an ample summary of "Christian fundamentals" - was rejected by Owen and his followers on the ground that they would not provide an <sup>a</sup>equ<sup>e</sup>ate basis for excluding Roman Catholics and Socinians from the Proposed Establishment. Powicke remarks that "the simplicity of Baxter's formula offered a sharp contrast to

the 20 (abortive) points of doctrine which Owen favoured and carried".(80).

A storm of opposition greeted this attempt to establish doctrinal uniformity. Cromwell is reported to have said, "I had rather that Mohammedanism were permitted amongst us than that one of God's children be persecuted."(81). John Milton in one of his famous sonnets referred to the committee in the following terms:-

"new foes arise  
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains,  
Help us to save free conscience from the paw  
Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw."(82).

The committee's original list of twenty articles was finally reduced to sixteen, the most important of which were the following: Belief in - the Bible as the Word of God, the existence and omnipotence of God, the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, Christ as the Redeemer, The Sacrifice of the Saviour, the sinfulness of man, the judgment of the dead, and the hope of everlasting life. (83).

But even these never received parliamentary sanction, since the House deemed it inexpedient at the time to debate on the vexed questions of Church government and doctrine, and soon afterwards the life of the Long Parliament came to a close.(84).

It appears, therefore, that although Owen declared that the fanatical claims to infallibility put forth by certain sects were arrogant, illogical, and schismatic, he himself still adhered to the basic principle that governs all forms of persecution; for as Jordan has indicated, -

"if men believe beyond the shadow of a doubt that they possess a body of absolute truth necessary to salvation, and that the retention of contrary views places one in the certainty of eternal damnation, they will, sooner or later, persecute those holding heterodox views in order to prevent

the spread of infection."(85).

It is therefore clear that Owen was actually only prepared to extend the privilege of toleration to those who received the basic principles of <sup>Calvinism</sup> ~~the Reformation~~. This was his point of view during the Interregnum, and his ideas did not undergo any profound modification even after the Restoration. His remark to Clarendon, that he would be satisfied if liberty of worship were extended to those who gave their assent to the doctrine of the Anglican Church (86), was in reality no more than a re-affirmation of his belief in the doctrinal "fundamentals" in a way that might appear attractive to those who were then in authority. He frequently argued in those days that Protestant Dissenters like himself did not deserve harsh treatment at the hands of the authorities because they agreed with the doctrine of the Anglican Church, ~~(87)~~ while their principles were totally irreconcilable with those of the Roman Catholics. So long as they renounced Popery and secured ministers and teachers who agreed with the Thirty-nine Articles of the Established Church, they deserved to be tolerated.(87). Nonconformists' beliefs, he pleaded, did harmonise with "the Scriptures, the doctrine of the primitive Church of the first four General Councils, the confessions of the Reformed Churches beyond the seas, and that in particular of the Church of England".(88). They only differed from the Church of England in their views on ecclesiastical polity and worship. No deep significance should be attached to this because, on account of human diversities, disagreements on these issues have always existed within the Christian Church.(89). Hence there could be no justification for employing violent means to compel Dissenters to conform in all respects with the

rites and traditions of the Anglican Church.(90).

He affirmed that Roman Catholics and Socinians ought to be debarred from communion because they were guilty of idolatry and blasphemy; the former worshipped the Virgin, the Saints, images, and the bread and wine in the service of the Mass, and the latter ascribed religious honour to a mere man. Even if only their worship of the bread and wine were taken into consideration in the case of the Roman Catholics, it would suffice to place them beyond the bounds of legitimate religious indulgence:

"It is the duty of the magistrate not to allow any public places for (in his judgment) false and abominable worship; as also, to demolish all outward appearances and demonstrations of such superstitious, idolatrous, and unacceptable service. Let Papists, who are idolaters, and Socinians, who are anthropolatrae, plead for themselves.(91).

The activities of Quakers and radical sectarians should also be restrained because they were a menace to both the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities; but "unorthodox" sects like the Arminians might be granted freedom of thought on condition that they made no attempt to spread their views either by preaching or through any act of public worship. Jordan truly affirms that -

"this solution was in fact considerably less tolerant than the Elizabethan Settlement of religion because it was predicated upon an Establishment whose limits were substantially less comprehensive and elastic."(92).

### C.

Owen's works contain all the main arguments which have been effectively used to show the absurdity of persecution and the merits of religious toleration. He taught that God personally revealed Himself to the individual believer whose decision, in the last resort, constituted for him the sole criterion for

establishing religious truth. No power on earth had the right to interfere with the believer's judgment in matters of faith, for everyone would ultimately be rewarded or condemned By God according to the efforts he has made to obey his own conscience. Religion was a personal response on the part of the individual to the message of Revelation, and therefore it could not be created or destroyed by the employment of physical violence.

He also stressed that Congregational churches were in no sense a menace to the government. From a political standpoint they could do no harm even though they were convinced that they ought to have the privilege of determining their own internal affairs. The existence of local autonomous churches would not detract from the authority of the civil ~~authorities~~ power, for the motives which usually led to mutual interference on the part of both State and Church had been removed by means of the process of decentralisation. But if the government had any further doubts on the matter it could arrange for such gatherings to be regularly inspected. In any case there no longer existed a valid political motive for persecution.

During his early years he argued for toleration on the ground that no absolutely authoritative form of church government existed, and that no perfect criteria for discovering Truth had yet been established. All types of ecclesiastical schemes were only relatively valid, and all attempts to crush heresy were merely based on the opinions of sinful creatures. Hence the tendency to employ coercive measures in order to compel others to conform outwardly with our own views was simply due to human selfishness, prejudice, arrogance, and pride. This argument has undoubtedly a strong appeal to the modern mind, but it was

soon given up by Owen in favour of others. He became a believer in the need for retaining certain basic doctrinal truths the acceptance of which was the condition of salvation, and he even attempted to take part in the task of defining them. By the aid of these "fundamentals" he thought that heresy was easily ascertainable. Moreover, he was soon convinced of the 'jure divino' character of Congregationalism. After that it was impossible for him to advocate toleration by arguing that there was no exact method for discovering heresy or that no perfect form of church government existed. Nevertheless, he distinguished between the relative importance of correct doctrine and ecclesiastical organization. Those who departed from the essential doctrines of the Christian religion were not to be granted freedom to propagate their tenets, whereas those who accepted those doctrines but differed from the Established Church in their views on church government and worship, should be allowed to follow the dictates of their own conscience. The former he regarded as sources of spiritual contamination which might endanger the well-being of others, while the latter merely disagreed on minor matters. The Roman Catholics and the Socinians were guilty of grave departure from the Truth, and so it would be sinful to grant them freedom of worship, whereas the Nonconformists ought to be tolerated by the Anglican authorities because in spite of their dissent they were true Christians.

Truth, he said, can only be advanced by spiritual means because it is essentially spiritual in nature. This is amply proved by history, which shows how the Gospel progresses wherever freedom of conscience is allowed. If we grant the Truth freedom to appeal to the human mind and conscience we can rest assured



that in the end it will be victorious. Physical compulsion, on the other hand, will convince no one. Toleration is therefore sanctioned by conscience. The Bible does not give its direct support either to persecution or toleration, although it is evident that the former is entirely out of harmony with the spirit of Christ. Toleration is a negative principle, and negative principles advocated by conscience and not condemned by Scripture ought to be observed. In his later years, after he himself had tasted the sufferings inflicted on the Nonconformists through the Clarendon Code, he became more disposed to show a certain degree of clemency even towards the Roman Catholics, of whom he said that if it were not for their own intolerance and their recognition of papal supremacy, it might be possible to grant them freedom of worship.

Following the fashion of the age he also appealed to certain political and economic considerations in support of toleration. The government suffered under the delusion that if they tolerated dissent, centres of discontent and rebellion might be created which ~~might~~<sup>would</sup> ultimately overthrow the rightful authorities. Actually toleration would have precisely the opposite effect: it would lead those who received it to show their gratitude by serving the authorities as faithfully as they could. It is also evident from the example of the Dutch that toleration promotes trade and commerce. Many Nonconformists, he says, are engaged in such pursuits, but the coercive measures of the government threaten~~ed~~ them with ruin, so that they feel they cannot under the present circumstances embark upon any fresh commercial transactions.

We have seen that Owen held beliefs which would have

furnished him with an adequate theory of toleration. Fear, the dominant psychological factor behind persecution, probably played a large part in preventing his developing those principles to their logical conclusion. He feared that complete toleration would lead to religious licence; that the State would lose its Christian character, and that heresies would arise to contaminate the nation and to disgrace religion itself. Hence his zeal for toleration was always curbed by considerations which tended towards the opposite direction. Both State and Church, according to him, were divinely ordained, and so it was the duty of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, in their various spheres, to carry out the revealed Will of God. The truths of salvation were in the custody of the Church, but it was the task of the State to protect the Church, and to aid her effort to spread the Gospel. The Church should direct the ~~Church~~ State in the punishment of religious offenders. Owen's idea of absolute Truth (the doctrinal fundamentals) together with his conception of the Christian character of the State considerably limited his support of toleration. In practice he was only prepared to tolerate Calvinistic communions. He made no consistent attempt to solve the problem; on the contrary, his thought continually vacillated from one view to the other. His belief in the right of private judgment, the spiritual nature of Truth, the essential disparity of Church and State, and the evil effects of persecution, cannot be harmonised with his teaching concerning the duty of the civil power to suppress heresy, or with his own unreadiness to tolerate sects such as Quakerism or Socinianism, without resorting to intellectual jugglery. He declares, on the one hand, that the State has no right to persecute for religious offences

because it cannot pass judgment on such matters, while on the other hand, he states that the magistrate ought to support that form of religion which adheres most faithfully to the revealed Will of God. Obviously if the civil government cannot judge spiritual offences, neither is it capable of deciding which of the various religious denominations is divinely ordained.

Owen did not succeed in extricating his thought completely from the 'weltanschauung' of the Middle Ages, though conditions in his generation differed so much from those which prevailed when the Roman Church held sway over Christendom. Mediaevalism had provided a congenial atmosphere for securing doctrinal and ecclesiastical uniformity, but by the seventeenth century such deep rifts had been made in the old system that even doctrinal uniformity of the kind conceived by Owen could no longer be achieved by means of religious compulsion. Men like Cromwell, Milton, and Baxter, perceived this more clearly than John Owen. In practice, however, he also manifested considerable generosity of spirit. It would be interesting to know whether he exerted any influence over the young mind of John Locke, who entered Christ Church as a student when he was dean. Locke's "Essay concerning Toleration" was the most important of his early contributions.

The problem of toleration still remains unsolved. The struggle between Church and State has even achieved new dimensions and a deeper significance through the rise of German National Socialism and kindred movements in modern times. But within the Christian Church herself there seems on the whole to be an ~~in~~increasing readiness to tolerate a number of communions which differ widely in their traditions and practices. The great

Christian conferences of the twentieth century have contributed immensely towards the development of mutual understanding and sympathy between the various branches of the universal Church. Christians, however, are still convinced that certain basic truths must at all costs be retained, and that upon their acceptance depends the eternal welfare of human beings. But this does not engender in them a desire to persecute the enemies of the faith. It is now realised that the Gospel can only ~~be~~ make headway through persuasion and by the practical application of its principles within the life of the world. Hence Christian toleration is based not upon indifference but upon a clear understanding of the nature of Christianity. To-day there is urgent need for all Christians, to whatever church or denomination they may belong, not merely to refrain from persecution but also to stress the Christian elements which they have in common. This alone will enable them to join together in their united struggle against the massed forces of Antichrist.

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FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR.

1. Cawdrey, "Independence a Great Schism proved against Dr. Owen, his Apology in his tract Of Schism", 17.
2. "A Review of the True Nature of Schism"(1657). "Works", XVII, 266.
3. Jordan, "The Development of Religious Toleration in England", I., 257.
4. "Indulgence and Toleration considered: in a Letter unto a Person of Honour" (1667), "Works", XIII., 527.
5. Burnet, "History of His Own Time", Vol. I., Book II., 451.
6. Parker, "Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polity", II. Parker had been a Puritan, but when he wrote this work he was household chaplain to Archbishop Sheldon, who ordered his "Polity" to be published. Andrew Marvell's witty "Rehearsal Transposed"(1672) gave Parker a staggering blow to which he failed to give an effective answer. See Hunt, "Religious Thought in England", II., 9; Thomson, "Life of Owen" ("Works", I., lxxxix).
7. "Truth and Imocence vindicated"(1669). "Works", XIII., 442.
8. ~~Jordan, Op. cit., I., 253.~~
8. Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II., 671-672.
9. Thesis, 21-22.
10. "Indulgence and Toleration considered, etc." "Works", XIII., 531.
11. "A Peace-Offering, in an Apology and Humble Plea for Indulgence and Liberty of Conscience"(1667), "Works", XIII., 569.
12. Perrinchief, "Indulgence not Justified", 9,12.
13. "Of Toleration; and the Duty of the Magistrate about Religion" (1648), "Works", VIII., 184.
14. Preface to "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'" (1663), "Works", XIV., 178.
15. Jordan, Op. cit., III., 429-430.
16. "In dulgence and Toleration considered", "Works", XIII., 531.
17. Jordan, Op. cit., I., 16.
18. "Of Toleration", "Works", VIII., 202.
19. "Christ's Kingdom and the Magistrates Power"(1652), "Works", VIII., 376.
20. Ibid., 394.
21. Ibid., 393.
22. "Of Toleration", "Works", VIII., 164.
23. Jordan, Op. cit., III., 433.
24. Ibid.
25. "A Peace-Offering", "Works", XIII., 559.
26. A law was passed in New England as early as 1638 stating that "every inhabitant who should not voluntarily contribute to all the charges, should be compelled thereto by assessment". By Owen's time the spirit of intolerance had become much more marked, and full toleration was not established until 1833. See Hood, "The Religious History of New England", Lecture III., 158.
27. "A Short Defensative about Church Government, Toleration, and Petitions abot these things" (1646), "Works", VIII., 46.
28. "Of Toleration", "Works", VIII., 182.
29. "A Country Essay for the practice of Church Government there" (1646), "Works", VIII., 55.
30. Freund, "Die Idee der Toleranz in England der Grossen Revolution" 121.
31. Perrinchief, "Indulgence not Justified", passim.

32. Anonymous, "The Life of the late Reverend and Learned John Owen D.D.", xxiii.
33. "A Peace-Offering", "Works", XIII., 574.
34. "Righteous Zeal encouraged by Divine Protection" (1648), "Works" VIII., 148.
35. "The Advantage of the Kingdom of Christ in the Shaking of the Kingdoms of the World"(1651), "Works", VIII., 329.
36. Ibid., 323.
37. Evelyn, "Diary", II., 57 (mentioned by Moffat in his preface to "The Golden Book of John Owen"); Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 385; Clark, "The Later Stuarts", 387.
38. Moffat, "The Golden Book of John Owen", 41-42.
39. "Reflections on a Slanderous Libel against Dr. Owen" (?), "Works", XVI., 275-276.
40. Asty, "Memoirs", xi.
41. Twells, "The Lives of Dr. Edward Pococke, the celebrated Orientalist, etc.", 174-175.
42. Acton, "History of Freedom and Other Essays", 43.
43. Ibid., 52-53.
44. "A Country Essay etc." "Works", VIII., 67.
45. "Of Toleration", "Works", VIII., 164.
46. Ibid., 192.
47. Cf. Owen's "Discourse concerning the Administration of Church Censures" (published posthumously, 1721), which is a defence and explanation of Congregational methods of Church discipline. "Works", XVI., 223-237. See also Troeltsch, Op. cit., II., 593, 694-695.
48. Goold's prefaratory note to "A Word of Advice to the Citizens of London", "Works", XIII., 576.
49. "A Letter concerning the Matter of the Present Excommunications" (?), "Works", XVI., 212, 217-218.
50. Ibid., 220.
51. Jordan, Op. cit., I., 31, 19-23.
52. Ibid., I., 82.
53. Ibid., LII., 9-10.
54. "An Account of the Grounds And Reasons on which Protestant Dissenters desire their Liberty"(?1667), "Works", XIII., 578.
55. "A Peace-Offering", "Works", XIII., 571.
56. "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'", "Works", XIV., 387-392.
57. "Of Toleration", "Works", VIII., 165.
58. Jordan, Op. cit., III., 461-462.
59. Clark, "The Later Stuarts", 34.
60. "The Statutes at large from the first year of James I to the tenth year of William III", III., 322-325.
61. "The Case of Present Distresses on Nonconformists examined" (1670), "Works", XIII., 580-582. "In that generation", writes Trevelyan, "there were only two admitted tests of incredibility in a witness - a previous conviction for perjury, or flat contradiction by some other witness on points raised by the trial on hand ... Informers of the lowest type were encouraged to do for society the needful work now done by trustworthy detectives; as they ran no risk of exposure before courts ignorant of the rules of evidence, there is grave reason to fear that the informer was, as often as not, a perjurer as well." Trevelyan, "England under the Stuarts", 401.
62. "The State of the Kingdom with respect to the present Bill

- against Conventicles"(1670), "Works", XIII., 583.
63. Ibid., 586.
  64. Trevelyan, Op. cit., 344.
  65. Jordan, Op. cit., III., 112.
  66. Troeltsch, Op. cit., II., 617.
  67. "Christ's Kingdom and the Magistrate's Power", "Works", VIII., 385.
  68. Ibid., 386.
  69. "Two Questions concerning the power of the Supreme Magistrate about Religion and the Worship of God" (1659), "Works", XIII., 514.
  70. "Christ's Kingdom and the Magistrate's Power", "Works", VIII., 381.
  71. "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux'", "Works", XIV., 383-384.
  72. Freund, Op. cit., 126, Foot-note 2.
  73. Jordan, Op. cit., I., 261.
  74. Sewell, "The History of the Quakers", I., 166-168.
  75. Jordan, Op. cit., III., 141-142. See Thesis, 11.
  76. Gardiner, "Cromwell's Place in History", 68; "History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate", II., 28.
  77. Jordan, Op. cit., III., 142.
  78. Masson, "The Life of John Milton", IV., 391-392. Masson reproduces the scheme in full.
  79. Powicke, "A Life of the Revd. Richard Baxter", 121-123. Cf. "Reliquiae Baxterianae", II., 198-199, par. 53.
  80. Powicke, "The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross", 202. For the chief points agreed upon by the committee see Neal, "History of the Puritans", IV., 89-91.
  81. Gardiner, "Oliver Cromwell", 199.
  82. The original title of the sonnet was, "To the Lord General Cromwell, May 1652, on the proposals of certain ministers at the Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel". Masson, "The Life of John Milton", IV., 441; Gardiner, "History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate", II., 33-34.
  83. Jordan, Op. cit., III., 165.
  84. Ibid., 142-143.
  85. Ibid., I., 24.
  86. Asty, "Memoirs", xxiii-xxiv.
  87. "An Account of the Grounds and Reasons on which Protestant Dissenters desire their Liberty", "Works", XIII., 577-578.
  88. "A Peace-Offering", "Works", XIII., 552.
  89. Ibid., 553.
  90. Cf. "The State of the Kingdom with respect to the present Bill against Conventicles" (1670), "Works", XIII., 586.
  91. "Of Toleration", "Works", VIII., 194.
  92. Jordan, Op. cit., LII., 434-435.
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PART II. - OWEN AND SOCINIANISM.Chapter 1. - A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY AND MAIN PRINCIPLES OF  
SOCINIANISM.

## A.

The great sixteenth century revolt against the Papacy did not fully express itself in the main Protestant movements represented by Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, and Calvin. Other religious bodies emerged alongside of them, of which Chiliasm, Mysticism, and Rationalism were the most important. Socinianism, which belonged to the last-mentioned group, was a reaction against Mysticism at the start, but its distinctive teaching had more in common with Mysticism than with the doctrinal systems of Zwingli and Calvin. In origin it was closely associated with Anabaptism, traces of which persisted even in its more developed form. While orthodox Protestant theology held that the Church existed to make men Christians, as the practice of child-baptism indicates, both Anabaptism and Socinianism stressed that one should be a member of the Christian community only after one has accepted Christianity. While orthodoxy regarded the Bible as a medium of the divine revelation which made human salvation possible, Anabaptism and Socinianism accepted it as a divine Law requiring implicit obedience. Both Anabaptism and Socinianism rejected the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and denied Christ's eternal generation from the essence of the Father.

Socinianism occupies a significant place in the history of Christian theology because it gave precise content and definition to many varying currents of thought which had for generations existed within the confines of the Church. Its appearance was



largely due to the Renaissance, the results of which the Socinians amalgamated with the methods of Scholasticism.(1). Employing the new critical technique of Humanism, and inspired by its keen sense of the value of the individual, Socinianism once more directed interest towards the old problems concerning the relations of God and man, by resurrecting the Pelagian doctrine of the freedom of the human will and the Scotist teaching concerning the unlimited arbitrary power of God.

Antitrinitarianism first became influential in Italy, where the power of the Roman Catholic Church had been so great that the influence of the Reformation was hardly discernible. In that country only men of wealth and culture were in those days liable to be influenced by Swiss and German movements, and even they were compelled to refrain from proclaiming their doctrines publicly and from establishing churches by the vigilance of the ecclesiastical authorities. Hence they formed small secret groups which speedily developed along independent lines, uncontrolled by influences from beyond the Italian frontiers or by the general consciousness of a Church.(2). It would be impossible to imagine a more favourable situation for the growth of a theology which tended in an increasing measure to diverge from the orthodox Creeds, and it is not surprising that the movement soon began to criticise all ecclesiastical dogmas along scholastic lines. But while they questioned received maxims they consistently emphasised the need for a lofty ethical standard. The academic nature of these early Italian groups characterised the whole subsequent history of the movement.(3).

The chief Italian Antitrinitarians of the mid-sixteenth century were Renato, Gribaldi, Blandrata, Gentili, Occhino, Gallo,

Alciati, Laelius Socinus, and Faustus Socinus.(4).

"They....were among the finest products of the humanism and free thought of Renaissance Italy....As laymen they had a deep-seated aversion to excessive theological severity and as humanists they rejected many of the 'coarser dogmas' of the Reformation." (5).

Soon many of them had to leave Italy to ensure their personal safety, and the majority went to Switzerland. This aroused the suspicions of Calvin, who commanded that Servetus, an Antitrinitarian who had come to Geneva, <sup>from Lyons</sup> should be burnt, and all the members of the Italian congregation at Geneva were compelled to sign a confession of faith in May, 1558. Soon afterwards Gentili was beheaded at Bern as a perjured heretic, while Blandrata and Alciati, being unable to clear themselves, fled to Poland. (6).

Poland and Transylvania then became for many years the headquarters of the Antitrinitarian movement. The permanent anarchy existing there provided a congenial environment for the development of a new movement. Freedom of conscience flourished there because the arm of authority was ineffective. The country attracted these Italians because many of their compatriots lived there and had contributed extensively towards the enrichment of Polish architecture in the vicinity of the capital. Calvin, who endeavored to curb their activities even after they had left Geneva, warned Prince Radzivil, the Polish ruler, that Blandrata should not be trusted because he was "wholly infected with Servetianism"; but the Italian was sufficiently astute to secure the good esteem of his patron by publicly expressing his belief in the Trinity.(7).

One of the most notable figures among these early Italian Antitrinitarians was Laelius Socinus. He was born at Siena in 1525, and came from a family that had been distinguished as jurists and canonists for many generations. Laelius himself was trained in the law, but the subject did not have any special attractions for him.(8).

At an early age he studied the writings of Martin Luther, but it was his researches into Hebrew and biblical literature and the influence of Humanism which ultimately caused him to abandon the Roman Catholic faith. His advanced religious views aroused so much suspicion that he left Italy to travel in other lands. Thus he came into contact with all the leading reformers, especially Melancthon and Calvin. He visited Poland twice, and probably came under the influence of Franciscò Lismanini, the founder of the Cracovian society which professed among other things to doubt the doctrine of the Trinity. It is possible that he himself was guided by Servetus to doubt this doctrine, but that the fate of Servetus warned him that it would be wiser to do no more than to disseminate his teaching secretly among small Italian groups. His brief career ended in 1562.(9). He is mainly significant on account of the influence which he wielded over his nephew, Faustus Socinus. The latter inherited his manuscripts, and generously acknowledged his indebtedness to his uncle. This suggests that Laelius was the real father of the Socinian movement. Faustus was much impressed by his conversations about religious topics and by his exegetical methods; he asserts that Laelius' exposition of "en archē" (John i.,1) supplied him with a new and fruitful point of departure in Christology.(10).

Faustus Socinus was born at Siena in 1539, and by profession he also was a lawyer. When he became of age he left Italy and lived for a time at Lyons and afterwards at Geneva, where he was a member of the Italian congregation. After returning to Italy in 1565 he conformed with the Roman Catholic faith, and Isabella de Medici, into whose services he entered at Florence, conferred both office and honour upon him. The fear of losing his patrimony prevented him from propagating his opinions for twelve years -

a period which in subsequent years he regarded as wasted. Towards the end of his stay in Italy, however, he published his "De Auctoritate Sacrae Scripturae". He left the country after the death of his benefactress and went to Basle, where he devoted himself to biblical studies and to the perusal of his uncle's notes. At Basle he was the centre of a group which met to discuss and enquire after religious truth. During this period he attacked the teaching of the Reformers in his "De Jesu Christo Servatore", which he published privately and anonymously. A copy of it was received by Blandrata, then the Polish court physician, and he immediately invited Faustus to come to Poland in the hope that he might be able to regulate the religious life of the Polish people (1579). The offer was eagerly accepted by Socinus, who thereby discovered a suitable sphere for his labours.

The Antitrinitarians, who had hitherto enjoyed the protection of the Transylvanian prince, Stephen Bathory, were at this time gaining some influence in Poland, and they had founded at Racow a church, a school, and a printing-press. The first open breach between them and the Reformed Churches had occurred in 1562. At this time they were much hampered by internal divisions, and attempts so far made to achieve a kind of unity within the movement had proved unsuccessful. But Socinus succeeded beyond all expectations in bringing order out of the prevailing chaos. He obtained the sympathy of the ruling classes for his protest against the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence; he overcame the objections of the Nonadorantists to invoking Christ in prayer; and he purged Anabaptism of some of its most irrational doctrines and moral excesses. Harnack has aptly indicated that Socinianism -

"had ... its main roots in the most sober and judicious critical movements of the past. Just on that account it succeeded in bringing under restraint what was wild, extravagant, and fanciful. Anyone who examines even rapidly the characteristic features of

the Socinian system of doctrine will meet at once with a Scotistic-Pelagian and with a critico-Humanistic element. On closer inspection he will perceive also the remnants still of an Anabaptist element; on the other hand there is an entire absence of Pantheistic, Mystical, Chiliastic, and socialistic elements." (11).

The decision of the Synod of Cracow (1603) that rebaptism was unnecessary to enter a Unitarian community was largely due to the efforts of Socinus. He disseminated his doctrines by publishing many anonymous works. After his marriage into one of the Polish families he thought that he could safely venture to acknowledge their authorship - a decision that proved disastrous. The masses revolted against him, and in 1598 he was expelled from Cracow. Some friends offered him the shelter of their homes, but the strenuousness of his life caused his premature death in 1604. It was he who gave Socinianism its organization, its tenets, and its name. He was the real founder of the movement and the moulder of its theology. That movement has since produced excellent men both in England and America. Nevertheless it was unfortunate that Socinus ignored "The correct tendencies which led the Church to the doctrines of the Godhead of Christ, the Trinity, and satisfaction" (12)

The movement had to encounter serious opposition in Poland shortly after his death. John Tyscovicus, an opulent merchant, was beheaded in 1611, and in 1638 the Diet of Warsaw enjoined that the Socinian Church and College at Racow should be closed and the printing-press demolished, while the ministers and professors who were associated with the movement were banished. They were severely persecuted during the Cossack invasion, and the Polish peasants revolted against them in 1655. Three years later the Diet of Warsaw forbade the public profession of Socinianism and the dissemination of its tenets on pain of death, and all Socinians were commanded

to leave the country unless they became Roman Catholics, Lutherans, or Calvinists. A still more severe edict was passed in 1660, when all Socinians were told to leave the country immediately, and thousands who preferred that to abandoning their beliefs went to Transylvania, Hungary, Prussia, Silesia, Moravia, Holland, and England.

Considerable disturbance occurred in Transylvania when Socinianism was first introduced there. In 1563 Blandrata met Francis David, the superintendent of the reformed Churches of Transylvania and Hungary, and converted him to Unitarianism. Both of them soon became objects of suspicion and they were asked to ~~exp~~ expound their opinions regarding certain points of doctrine to a synod of the ministers of Transylvania and Hungary, but their views were so ambiguously expressed that the synod was unable to discover in them any cause for censure. Subsequent attempts of a similar nature proved equally unfruitful until a synod of the orthodox ministers held in October, 1569, pronounced Unitarian tenets to be "heretical blasphemies." The Unitarians, nevertheless, enjoyed the protection of the Prince, John Sigismund, until his death in 1571.

Stephen Bathor, Sigismund's successor, was a strenuous supporter of freedom of conscience, but during his reign the situation was much complicated by a rupture that occurred between Blandrata and David in 1574, on account of the latter's belief that Christ could not be appropriately addressed in prayer. Socinus' intervention on this occasion did not ease matters, and David continued to express his views in public. Blandrata then devoted all his energies to hav<sup>ing</sup> him removed from office and placed in confinement; and it was decided by the General Assembly of the States at Weissenburg (June, 1579) that he should be kept a close

prisoner in the Castle of Deva, where he died the following November,

This was only a temporary victory for Blandrata. His influence soon waned in Transylvania, and he returned to Poland in 1580, where two years later he was strangled by a relative. Nomadorantism once more revived in Transylvania after Blandrata's departure, and severe laws were passed to curb the activities of those who refused to worship Christ. This caused many of the nobility to withdraw their support from the movement, and the progress of Unitarianism in Transylvania was thus considerably retarded.

Only in Poland and Transylvania has Socinianism been extensively established. But the persecution inflicted on the movement in these countries was largely responsible for the wide dissemination of its principles in other lands. The Socinians were allowed to establish churches in Prussia and Brandenburg, but this was forbidden in Flanders and Holland, where they had to take advantage of any opportunities open to them to join other Christian communities such as the Remonstrants, the Mennonites (or Low Arminians) and the Baptists. This process of amalgamation was for them a natural procedure because "purely critical scientific theology has no fellowship principle of its own".(13). Wherever they formed their own communities their assemblies took the character of religious academies or schools in which -

"the uniting element is only intellectual agreement combined with all the needs of expansion and instruction, but also with all the dangers of division and the lack of that comprehensive spiritual substance which belongs to the common possession of the permanent witness of the churches."(14).

They obtained considerable influence over the Arminians by identifying themselves with their churches. Owen perceived this and continually referred to it, as for instance:-

"Grotius, Episcopus, Curcullaeus, etc...with others, must go a middle way to accomodate with the Socinians."(15).

After the death of Socinus the chief leaders of the movement were: Smalcus, Moscorovius, Volkelius, Ostorodius, Crellius, Schlichtingius, Wolzogenius, Przipcovius, Wissowatius, and Brenius.

Considerable opportunities were ~~enjoyed~~ by the Socinians in the Dutch states to publish their opinions, and men like Andrew Wissowatius devoted themselves to the task of collecting and reprinting their scattered writings, which were published in the "Bibliotheca Fratrum". This collection, which originally consisted of eight folio volumes, contained the chief publications of Socinus, Crellius, Schlichtingius, and Wolzogenius. Others were afterwards added to them. The ninth volume consisted of the works of Przipcovius and Wissowatius, and the tenth contained the publications of Brenius. The treatises of Volkelius and Smalcus and some of the writings of Schlichtingius are somewhat rarer. These were the main works of the Continental Socinians.

#### B.

The "Racovian Catechism", which was composed by several authors, contains the clearest contemporary exposition of Socinian beliefs in existence, and one of Owen's primary objectives in his anti-Socinian writings was to refute its teaching. It was originally published in Polish in 1605, and was based on a confession of faith composed by George Schomann and probably incompletely revised by Socinus and Peter Statorius, both of whom, however, died before its actual publication. The task of final revision was undertaken by Valentinus, Smalcus, Moscorovius, and Volkelius. A German translation was made in 1608, and it made its appearance in Latin during the following year. The Latin translation together with a biography of Socinus by



Przipcovius was printed in London in 1651, but soon afterwards the British Parliament ordered the sheriffs of London and Middlesex to burn all the copies made. An English translation of the Latin version was published at Amsterdam in the following year, and there is reason to suppose that it was the work of John Biddle.

The publication of the Catechism in London startled even the British tolerantists. Owen played a prominent part in the efforts made to draw the attention of Parliament to the dangers that threatened the nation through the propagation of such heretical beliefs.(16). He and fourteen outstanding Independent ministers presented themselves at the bar of Parliament early in 1652, and after stating their complaints they left a petition, together with certain documents and a copy of the Catechism, for the consideration of the House. Parliament immediately appointed a large committee of forty to investigate the whole matter, and after this committee had drawn out a list of the "principal blasphemous errors" the Catechism was condemned.(17).

The "Racovian Catechism" contains a lucid, detailed, and comprehensive exposition of Socinian doctrine. It opens with the declaration that the Christian religion is "the way pointed out and revealed to men by God to obtain eternal life" - a way that is indicated through the Holy Scriptures and especially through the New Testament. Religion is correct knowledge of saving doctrine. Salvation can only be obtained by obeying the commands and precepts of Christ, who has given perfect expression to the divine Law. We know that Christ's teaching has absolute authority because His Resurrection and Exaltation clearly testify that it has received God's approval, but all ecclesiastical dogmas which do not help men to obey it are useless and should be discarded. In the last resort men shall be rewarded or punished according to their deserts.

While it is admitted that the Bible contains much material of no essential importance, yet it should occupy a primary place in Christian theology because it expresses those fundamental principles without acceptance of which no man can be saved. The validity of its testimony is unquestionable. This is especially true of the New Testament, for its authors were men of absolute integrity placed in a most favourable position to obtain trustworthy information, and its precepts and promises are so sublime that they must have emanated from God Himself. The Old Testament should also be highly valued because the New Testament testifies to its veracity. The certitude, perfection, and perspicuity of Holy Scripture makes the attainment of salvation possible for all men.

Men are able to comprehend the nature of Scriptural authority and to understand the contents of the sacred writings in the light of their rational judgments, for reason alone can determine the relative worth of Scriptural principles and guide men in their practical application of them. Hence every interpretation or exegesis that is repugnant to "right reason" should be rejected, and investigations into Scriptural data should continue until a rational interpretation of them has been attained.

By adopting this procedure it will be discovered that according to Scripture God is a spiritual, invisible Being, possessing perfect dominion, power, and wisdom, for it is rational to suppose that those passages which contain this information about the Supreme Lord of all things are of such fundamental importance that they ought to be employed as criteria for interpreting those texts which seem to suggest that He possesses a material body or limited faculties. In virtue of His absolute

freedom and unlimited jurisdiction He has supreme authority to administer rewards and punishments: He may destroy sinners or He may pardon them - as He wills. His omnipotence is not even limited by His own essential attributes; His justice and His mercy are not inherent qualities of His nature but merely products of His infinite Will.

It is only possible for one Being to have supreme dominion over all things. Hence reason asserts that the Godhead must be a unity and that the doctrine of the Trinity, which ascribes the same Divinity to the Son and the Holy Spirit, must be rejected. The Father and the Son may be one in testimony, but they are not so in essence. The "orthodox" doctrine detracts from the divine Majesty by supposing that God's glory may be transferred to others, and because of its essential falsity it must also be derogatory to both Christ and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, if Christ's essential Divinity were granted it would be meaningless to affirm that He has given men an example. This doctrine, however, has no adequate Scriptural foundation.

The traditional doctrine of Christ's Two Natures is equally irrational. Two substances so opposed as Deity and Humanity evidently cannot be united in the same Person. Neither could Christ have partaken of essential Divinity because God's Nature is indivisible and incommunicable. This is Christ's real significance: that He was a true man, whose position was similar to our own, who died, and who was raised from the dead. By contemplating these facts we may derive much consolation - especially from the thought that if we live as He lived we also shall be raised from the dead and enjoy immortality.

Christ, however, was different from other men in the sense that

God had chosen Him from among others to be sanctified for a particular purpose - to receive a special commission to reveal His Will to mankind. He was given wisdom and power for this end, and this explains the perfect holiness of His life. Christ may even be called "God" provided that the word is used only to indicate that He has now received from the Father supreme authority in Heaven and earth in virtue of which He has the power to judge all men. His Divinity is the Father's gift: essentially He is a creature raised by God to a position of sovereignty.

"Son of God" is the most appropriate expression that may be used for describing Christ during His earthly life; but even then the appellation "God" is ascribed to Him in Scripture on account of His power and authority. But it was after His Resurrection that He became truly worthy of this honour, for then He became immortal like the Father and was given supreme power in Heaven and upon earth. There is no qualitative difference, however, between Christ and believers, for both are similarly related to God: it is a relation that consists of love and favour on the part of God and of obedience and dependence on the part of believers. Christ was God's adopted Son, who became "God" through His perfect obedience and trust. The miracles which He performed are no proofs of His essential Divinity because it was through the Father's power that He performed <sup>them</sup>. They are significant because they indicate that the Almighty was present with Him in a supreme degree - that He was the most favoured of all men.

The Catechism then urges that Christ, as a mere man chosen by God for special honour, had no existence before His birth from the Virgin and that accordingly He had no part in the original creation of the world. All Scriptural passages attributing creation to Him should be understood to refer to the "new creation" which

occurred under the Gospel dispensation. Christ actually transformed society through the Gospel which He preached, and so brought a "new world" into existence over which His authority was supreme. Nevertheless, the possibility of interpreting these sections as if they meant that God created the world with Christ in view should not be overlooked.

On account of His God-given power and supremacy Christians should regard Christ as a worthy Object of that honour and worship addressed to God, and He Himself has commanded believers to address Him in prayer. While the Father remains the supreme Object of worship, after the coming of Christ men may approach the Father in His Name. Thus the essential character of worship remains unaltered although its mode has changed. God wills that we should worship Christ, and in obeying His Will we cannot be guilty of idolatry. Christ's government is divine, and so divine honour should be ascribed to Him. An additional incentive for worshipping Him is provided by the fact that He is related to men in the special capacity of a Saviour who understands them, sympathises with them, and has manifested His great love towards them, so that when we fear to approach the Father we know that we can draw near to Him as our Mediator. His mediatorial functions may be separately considered in the light of His prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices.

The Catechism evidently considers His prophetic office to be the primary one. In virtue of it Christ revealed the Father's will to men and mediated the New Covenant. He obtained the knowledge necessary for doing this work by ascending into Heaven, where He saw God and witnessed the blissful life of the heavenly community. After He had returned to this earthly life He was divinely inspired to tell men of the glory which He had seen in

the celestial sphere, and thus He was qualified to be a Mediator of the New Covenant, which contains all the divine precepts and promises together with information as to how and why we ought to conform with them. This Covenant, which is thoroughly spiritual in character, modified, improved, and supplemented the one conveyed through Moses. Among its special commands are those enjoining prayer, baptism, and the breaking of bread. It promises to believers remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the enjoyment of a blessed and immortal existence in Heaven after their earthly career is over.

The Covenant was finally ratified through Christ's death, which clearly proved that He was not afraid of delivering His message (or the Covenant) even when He was faced with the most ~~xxx~~ dreadful consequences. His death, however, becomes even more significant when it is considered as the gateway through which He entered into the glory of His resurrection and exaltation. There is no direct connection between the Saviour's death and the forgiveness of sins, but indirectly the Cross is of the highest significance in this respect, because without it Christ would not have received from God the status which enables Him to be the Saviour, Lord, and Judge of human beings. It is on account of His post-resurrection power and authority that He is able to forgive men their trespasses.

Hence the doctrine of vicarious suffering is evidently superfluous. It is also irrational and non-Scriptural. There was no need to satisfy divine justice before God could forgive sinners. There was no real wrath in Him against sinners and so there was no need to reconcile Him. Enmity was wholly on man's side, and it was Christ's task to show how <sup>men</sup> ~~they~~ might turn to the Father and be reconciled with Him. As Mediator He reveals the

Father's will to men and confirms that revelation with His own blood, while, in His exalted state, He hears the supplications of His people and approaches God on their behalf.

Men attain salvation through faith, or absolute trust, in God, whereby they are enabled to fix their attention upon the divine promises and to obey the divine precepts. Faith supplements the deficiency of our works and so contributes largely to our justification before the Father. Both faith and obedience, however, are the fruit of man's autonomous power. Each man is free to choose whether or not he will exercise faith and render obedience. But human nature has been so stained by sin that man now only possesses a very limited ability to perform good works. Nevertheless, since he can still ~~apply~~ incline his will to perform them his destiny is in his own hands, and even God Himself is ignorant of it until his earthly life has been brought to a close. The only acceptable doctrine of predestination is that which proclaims the ultimate salvation of believers and the final condemnation of unbelievers: its character must be conditional and hypothetical. No man can be saved unless he himself freely responds to divinely revealed Truth. In other words, faith and obedience are the causes sine qua non of justification, and justification must be preceded by sanctification.

In performing the duties of His prophetic office Christ revealed God's will to men, but in His priestly capacity He appears before God on man's behalf. He was a Priest even during His life on earth within the limits afforded by His human nature, for He then offered prayers for others and shed His blood as an offering for sin. Several factors, however, prevented Him from being our perfect High Priest while He lived among men. It was necessary for Him to taste

the bitter dregs of the Cross before He could fully understand men and sympathise with them. During His earthly life He had no suitable tabernacle for performing His priestly functions, neither did He possess an immortal body in which He could offer eternal intercession on our behalf. Hence He could not perfectly fulfil His priestly office before He had been raised from the dead and had entered into His glory. But in <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ heavenly sanctuary He presents His offering and intercedes for sinners, and His actions "powerfully impel God to grant the remission of our sins, and are the most efficacious means of our reconciliation." The worst sins may be forgiven through Him provided there is real repentance and true reformation of life.

It was after His resurrection ~~and~~ exaltation that Christ became King, for the Father then gave Him all power in heaven and upon earth to govern, protect, and save those who believe in Him. He thus possesses supreme authority to judge all men, to reward the good and to punish the wicked, to succour the needy, to rescue sinners from death and hell and to restore them to immortal life.(18)

The "Racovian Catechism" was never intended to be a "Creed" which ~~is~~ equally binding upon all. Its utterances are of a didactic nature(19) and its scholastic character justifies Harnack's description of it as "a course of instruction for producing theologians"(20). Curtis concisely remarks that it is "essentially theological rather than religious, rationalistic yet supernaturalistic, controversial and argumentative."(21). Throughout the work little value is attached to the Old Testament, while even the teaching of the New Testament is frequently modified to suit the preconceived notions of the Socinians. Reason is enthroned, and the teaching of Scripture is made to conform with its dictates. Some of



its criticisms of received dogmas were valuable, and its exegesis of some texts have proved fruitful. But in spite of its deference to reason it made no attempt to remove the supernatural and miraculous elements from the Person and history of Christ(22). Its failure to appreciate the religious needs which led the Church to formulate the doctrine of original sin, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of Christ's vicarious suffering, characterised the whole Socinian movement. Its richest passages are those dealing with the teaching of Jesus. Its stress upon the ethical content of the Gospel and upon the Saviour's humanity was in true harmony with the teaching of the New Testament. The Gospel-message is consistently apprehended from the ethical standpoint, so that the essential teaching of the "Catechism" may be summarised in these words: man has within himself the power to exercise faith in God and to incline his will to obey the divine precepts imparted through Christ and so to qualify himself for receiving forgiveness, salvation, and immortality.

### C.

Socinianism had been widely disseminated in England through various channels before the outbreak of The Civil War, but the vigilance of the ecclesiastical authorities had strictly restrained its activities. But with the removal of the authority of the State Church the sect made such rapid progress as to cause serious concern to the "orthodox", who immediately tried to curb its activities. Webberly, the author of a number of antitrinitarian tracts, was expelled from Oxford in 1643; Paul Best, the leading member of the Unitarian group which met at Coleman Street, London, was in 1645 summoned before Parliament on the charge of heresy(23); and soon afterwards the activities of Biddle were brought to the notice of the House.

The sect was organised on English soil by Thomas Lushington, a professor at Pembroke College, Oxford, and John Biddle. The latter is considered to have been the ablest of the early English Socinians, and he is frequently described as the father of the movement in Britain. He was born at Wotton-under-Edge in 1616, and graduated at Oxford in 1641. When he was a teacher at Gloucester he began to divulge his views in a small tract published privately and entitled, "Twelve Arguments drawn out of the Scripture: wherein the commonly received Opinion touching the Deity of the Holy Spirit is clearly and fully refuted, etc." When the magistrates were informed of this they committed Biddle to the county jail, whence he was summoned before Parliament to answer for his errors. The committee which investigated his case recommended that he should be placed in the custody of an officer of the House for five years. This, however, did not silence the irrepressible Socinian. He republished his "Twelve Arguments" in 1647, and in the following year the "Confession of Faith touching the Holy Trinity" and ~~"To the Law and to the Testimonies"~~ "To the Law and to the Testimonies" appeared from his pen. These were soon followed by other works: "The Testimonies of Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, etc....Concerning that One God and the Persons of the Holy Trinity", "A Twofold Catechism", and "The Apostolical and True Opinion concerning the Trinity." These aroused so much hostility that Parliament in 1648 passed an ordinance which made it a capital offence to publish anything that was derogatory to the divine nature and perfections or denied the Deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit(24). Fortunately for Biddle the ordinance was never put into operation.

The dissolution of the Long Parliament did not ensure his personal safety, because those who afterwards came into power

were even more fanatically opposed to his views than their predecessors had been, and Biddle himself, through his numerous publications, continued to provoke antagonism. The appearance of a Latin translation of the "Racovian Catechism" in London in 1651 and of an English translation (probably the work of John Biddle) at Amsterdam during the following year has already been mentioned. In 1653 Biddle published the following works:- An English translation of Przipcovius' "Life of Socinus", "Brevis Disquisitio", and "A Discourse concerning the Peace and Concord of the Church". Indeed Owen goes so far as to say that his numerous writings were causing so much alarm among Continental theologians that Mauresius, a professor at Groningen, had charged the whole English nation with Socinianism!(25).

Parliament began to devote its attention to Biddle's case during the latter part of 1654 "largely in order to emphasize forcibly the existence of dangerous heresy and to dramatize its demand that control over damnable error should be retained within its grasp"(26). He was placed in custody and an order was issued that his books should be burned. The House proclaimed in January, 1655, that his "Twofold Catechism" and his "Apostolical and True Opinion concerning the Trinity" were dangerous, blasphemous, and heretical. The case was subsequently transferred to the Upper Bench and he was granted bail. If things had been allowed to take their normal course it appears that the government would have taken no further proceedings against him. Some of the sectarian extremists, however, decided to make use of the case because the Council had issued an ordinance curtailing the freedom of the press on account of the frequent publication of malicious news-sheets. They declared that the ordinance was due to Biddle's activities and maintained that it gravely threatened the liberty of conscience previously granted by

the Instrument of Government. Moreover, Biddle himself shortly afterwards injudiciously accepted the challenge of Griffin, a Baptist minister, to a public disputation on the Divinity of Christ. The Council warned the Lord Mayor to suppress all such meetings in future, and Biddle was once more imprisoned on the charge of "publicly denying, that Jesus Christ was the Almighty or Most High God." Cromwell, however, had no desire to shed blood on account of anyone's religious beliefs, and Biddle was banished to the Scilly Isles in October, 1655. John Knowles, who was himself imprisoned shortly afterwards, became for a time the leader of his London congregation, and he was followed by Nathaniel Stuckey, who ~~strove~~ strove without success to propagate Socinianism in the city and published many of Biddle's works.(27). Biddle was afterwards released, but at the Restoration he was once more placed in custody, where he died in 1662.

Although Biddle's views, on the whole, conform with the standard form of Socinianism as expressed, for instance, in the "Racovian Catechism", yet with regard to several minor points of doctrine he pursued an independent line of thought. He openly admitted this, and stated that "in some lesser things Socinus, as a man, went awry, However in the main he hit the truth."

It has already been shown that he insisted upon a more literal interpretation of Scripture.(28). He maintains that if the contents of the Bible were carefully studied in the light of reason, and if the 'plain' meaning of its statements were accepted, it would be discovered that they reveal God to be a Spirit who possesses a body similar in form to our own, and that He resides in Heaven. The contrast between this view and the usual stress laid by the Socinians upon the spiritual nature of the Deity draws the attention of even the most casual reader.

He also says that the Holy Spirit is a person created by God. Thus He is dependent upon God and is one of His most distinguished servants. By ascribing personality to the Spirit Biddle differed from the ordinary teaching of Socinianism. He goes farther than they also in stressing that God demands actual obedience from men, not a mere desire to obey. But in his criticisms of current ~~R~~ Protestant dogmas as well as in his teaching concerning the Person and Offices of Christ, together with his views about the mode of obtaining salvation, there is little to distinguish him from the others.

Biddle's works present an <sup>c</sup>excellent example of the unbridled speculative tendencies inherent in the Socinian movement. They give us the impression that he was a man who was determined at all costs to discover the original teaching of Scripture unhampered by traditional interpretations and uncontrolled by ecclesiastical authority. Orthodox theologians disliked him on account of his perpetual desire to formulate new ideas, and this view was echoed by Owen in his statement that he had heard

"by those of Mr. Biddle's time and acquaintance in the university; that what ability he had then obtained, were it more or less, he still delighted to be exercising of it in opposition to received truths in philosophy; and whether an itching desire of novelty, and of emerging thereby, lie not at the bottom of the course he hath since steered, he may do well to examine himself."(29).

But in spite of the fact that he was deeply learned in the Scriptures and had a masterly knowledge of Greek, yet he was neither a deep nor an original~~ly~~ thinker. Even his crude anthropomorphic conception of the Deity had been presented by others before his time. His personal life, however, seems to have been of a high standard. Toulmin testified that he was "a pious, holy, and humble man", while even Anthony Wood declared that if his opinions were left out of account "there was little or nothing blameworthy on him".

Under his able and energetic leadership Socinianism made rapid progress in Britain.

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FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE (PART TWO).

1. Harnack, "History of Dogma", VII, 120-121.
  2. Cunningham, "Historical Theology", II, 157.
  3. Clow, Art. on "Socinianism" (E.R.E.); Harnack, Op.cit., 163, Foot-note 1.
  4. Cambridge Modern History, 393, 716. (1931 Ed.).
  5. Jordan, "The Development of Religious Toleration in England", I, 306.
  6. Owen, in his "Vindiciae Evangelicae" ("Works", XII, 41), states that Servetus "is the only person in the world, that I ever read; or heard of, that ever died upon the account of religion, in reference to whom the zeal of them that put him to death may be acquitted."
  7. Owen, Op. cit., 18.
  8. Jordan, Ibid., Foot-note 5.
  9. "The Life of that Incomparable Man" by a Polonian Knight; Clow, Art. on "Socinianism" (E.R.E.).
  10. Cf. also what Owen says, - Op. cit., 25.
  11. Harnack, Op. cit., 120.
  12. Harnack, Op. cit., 136-137.
  13. Troeltsch, "The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches", II., 749.
  14. Ibid., 967.
  15. Owen, Op. cit., 49.
  16. Thesis, 100.
  17. Masson, "Life of Milton", IV., 390 ff., 438-439; Gardiner, "History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate", II., 27-28.
  18. Jordan (Op. cit., 307) gives an account of the contribution of Socinianism to toleration. He remarks about the "Racovian Catechism" that "the principle of religious toleration has been well described as the mainspring of the document". (See Foot-note 1).
  19. Curtis, Art. on "Confessions" (E.R.E.), Sect. 22.
  20. Harnack, Op. cit., 138.
  21. Curtis, Ibid.
  22. Ibid.
  23. Jordan, Op. cit., II, 89-90. Best was released from prison in 1647, but the incident had revealed that Parliament "regarded itself as lacking legislation effective for the punishment of serious error and blasphemy".(Jordan).
  24. Jordan, Ibid., 113.
  25. Owen, Op. cit., 7. Three British divines attempted in 1653 to refute Biddle's teaching, viz. Nicolas Estwick ("An Examination of His Confession of Faith"), Poole ("Plea for the Godhead of the Holy Ghost"), and Francis Cheynel ("The Divine Trinunity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"). See Goold's Prefaratory Note, "Works", XII., 4.
  26. Jordan, Op. cit., II. 204.
  27. Ibid., 203-208.
  28. Thesis, 44 ff.
  29. Owen, Op. cit., 82.
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Chapter 2. - OWEN'S ANTI-SOCINIAN WRITINGS AND A SYNOPSIS OF HIS  
THEOLOGY.

A.

When Socinianism first attracted the attention of the British public Owen came to the fore as one of its most formidable opponents. He and others made such a strong protest before Parliament in 1652 against the publication of the "Racovian Catechism" that an order was issued to seize and burn all available copies of it in London and Westminster. In those days he was the dean of Christ Church and his influence was considerable. His "Diatriba", or "A Dissertation on Divine Justice: or, the Claims of Vindictory Justice Vindicated, etc.", as it was called in Hamilton's translation (1), was written in 1653 ~~was~~ to prove that Christ's Satisfaction was necessary for salvation because Justice was one of God's essential attributes, and to show, by scholastic methods, the futility of the contrary views expressed in the "Racovian Catechism" and expounded by Crellius and Socinus. This led him to criticise the doctrine of Twisse, Vossius, Rutherford, and others - that God could have willed to save sinners without Satisfaction - and to show the affinity of such teaching with Socinian heresy. Owen's views, however, were afterwards challenged by Thomas Gilbert, the author of "Vindiciae Supremi Dei Domini (cum Deo) Initiae" (1665), and by Baxter in his treatise against Infidelity.(2).

The Council of State, being convinced that the religious life of the nation was exposed to the contamination of a perfidious heresy through the advent of Socinianism, commanded Owen in 1654 to undertake its refutation. He welcomed this congenial task, and soon afterwards his "Vin<sup>4</sup>iciae Evangelicae" (3) was published. This work had a threefold aim: firstly, to refute Biddle's "Twofold Catechism" <sup>secondly,</sup> to prove the falsity of the views held by the Polish Socinians and

especially those expressed in the "Racovian Catechism"; and thirdly, to expose the Socinianising tendency of Hugo Grotius' Scriptural comments.(4). This and the "Diatriba" were his main literary efforts in his campaign against Socinianism, but material of a similar character is also contained in some of his other publications, especially the following: his popular "Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity" (5), "A Vindication of ~~Some~~ Passages in a Discourse concerning Communion with God, from the Exceptions of William Sherlock" (6), "The Doctrine of Justification by Faith" (7), and his well-known "Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews", in which preceding commentators on "Hebrews" are criticised for not having adequately confuted the Socinian doctrine of the Person and Priesthood of Christ (8). Many passages in these works clearly indicate that the need for refuting this heresy was ever present in his thoughts. The following is cited as a typical instance:-

"Do not look upon these things as things afar off, wherein you are little concerned, The evil is at the door; there is not a city, a town, scarce a village in England, wherein some of this poison is not poured forth." (9).

But before proceeding to give a detailed analysis of his criticisms of Socinian doctrine, it would be advantageous at this point to summarise his chief theologibal principles.

#### B.

Owen claims that all his theological material is drawn from the Bible, which he considers to be a sacred volume written by human agents who had been directly inspired for this purpose by the Holy Spirit. Although these writers lived in various periods and differed widely from one another in many respects, yet these human variations made not the slightest difference to the validity of their testimony because, in writing these records, they were merely passive



instruments in the hands of God, and the messages which they delivered hold good for all time. Hence it would be erroneous to distinguish between the relative spiritual value of the books of Scripture. The Old Testament is on a par with the New Testament. That the latter contains records of the historical life of Christ, and gives us an insight into the belief of the Early Church regarding the infinite worth of His Person and Work, does not entitle anyone to suppose that the revelation which it contains belongs to a higher plane than that of the Old Testament. The Old Testament also testifies to Christ - the saints who lived before the Incarnation being able to behold Him in the future through the eyes of faith as clearly as those who lived after that event could behold Him in the past. The Bible as a whole is the foundation of Christian theology. The human mind may not be able to grasp all the truths which it contains, but the Scriptural Word must not be rejected merely because human reason fails to comprehend it. Man should avoid the temptation to pervert the Scriptures or to use them to secure his own ends. Through them the divine Word has come to man, whose task is to listen to the message and to obey it.

This, however, does not mean that the task of expounding Holy Writ is superfluous. On the contrary, it needs to be explained for the benefit of each generation, and history shows how God has raised men, who were specially endowed with spiritual gifts to perform this important function, throughout the ages. Expositors frequently discover that they are unable to do this work satisfactorily without employing terms other than those contained in the Bible. The nature of the task allotted to them makes this inevitable. Even so, Christian exegesis should never add to, or detract from, the divine Word. Philosophical terms, for instance, are rightly employed if

they are found to be valuable as means to express the original meaning of any particular section that may be under consideration, and the Church has actually used them to safeguard the Truth and to counteract heresies.

But in spite of his stress upon the need to make the Bible the Alpha and the Omega of Christian theology, the most casual reader of Owen's writings cannot fail to note how the influence of Neo-Platonism, after it had filtered through scholastic channels, had left an indelible mark upon his doctrine of God. The reverent agnosticism, which St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas had inherited from Hellenic philosophy, is also perceptible in Owen's theology. He conceived of God, in the traditional scholastic fashion, as an infinite Person possessing the sum of all perfections, and as a "simple" Being having no parts, arguing that, since all His attributes were perfect and infinite, they must have been identical with one another. In reality, however, we do not possess any positive knowledge of what God is in Himself. His true nature remains "indeterminate". On account of our human limitations we can only describe Him by means of negations. From this idea of God, which is identical with that of the philosophical Absolute, Owen deduces all the divine attributes of self-existence, immensity, and immutability. Scripture is then introduced to prove that the conclusions so reached are valid, and those biblical passages which agree with them are declared to be of supreme value in exegesis, because only in their light can those sections, which superficially seem to convey different and more anthropomorphic ideas of God, be understood.

God thus conceived is the eternal ground of all being, the first Cause of all things, the first who ever existed and acted, who, through the changing phenomena of time, realises His own

eternal and immutable Will. Since He is unchangeable He has no desires, no passions, no anger - man's tendency to ascribe these to Him being merely due to his own inability to express what He is except by means of terms which, strictly speaking, are only applicable to ~~Himself~~ Himself. The imputation of passions and desires to the Deity is also further debarred by the fact that He possesses absolute foreknowledge. It would be absurd to attribute anger, disappointment, etc., to One who knows the end from the beginning. Owen's belief in the divine prescience rests upon what he accepted as a theological axiom - that all things have been predetermined by God who, out of the wide range of possible existences, chose to give some things actuality. He considers divine foreknowledge and divine predetermination to be inseparable. From God's standpoint all things are predetermined and foreknown, so that what may appear to be contingent to man's limited vision is in reality absolutely determined. Since God has perfect power and foreknowledge He is able to rule the world providentially, and those who realise this can completely trust and confide in Him.

God always acts in accordance with His own eternal decrees. But this does not limit His freedom in any way because in the performance of every action both His Will and His Understanding are exercised. Divine actions are simply the outward expressions of the divine essence and character. He acts justly, for instance, because He is essentially just.

Owen accepts the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, which states that the Deity consists of three Persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - subsisting in one divine essence. Since each Person is infinite, the three must, in the last resort, be identical. Moreover, each Person possesses in Himself the sum of

all divine perfections, and so any one of the three may be the legitimate Object of Christian worship. The Father, who alone is self-existent, is the fountain of mercy, grace, glory, the covenant of grace, and all Gospel revelations; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father's essence and has received from Him all His powers and attributes; and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son to complete the task of human salvation.

In contrast to Socinianism Owen maintains that the essence of the Gospel is expressed in the Scriptural message - that Jesus Christ, who by eternal generation participates of the divine nature, came into the world to save sinners by taking human flesh and dying on their behalf. His Divinity and Lordship were recognised by His followers even during His historical life, for They acknowledged Him then as worthy of divine honour and worship. This proves that He was essentially divine, for "equality of essence can alone give equality of dignity and honour." But He was also a real man, for He had a human soul and a human body together with all their essential properties. Nevertheless, He did not have a human personality. The inmost core of His personality was divine. His human nature subsisted in that which was divine.

We shall arrive at the conclusion that the Son was eternally begotten of the Father's essence if we further consider what is implied by the phrase, "divine immutability". If the Father had begotten the Son within the temporal series there would have been a change within the Godhead. But that is unthinkable because the attribute of immutability belongs to the very conception of Deity. Christ's generation from the Father must therefore have been eternal. Moreover, even after His generation He must have remained within the Deity. In other words, Christ must have eternally

existed within the Godhead. This truth, which is expressed in the Christian doctrine of His pre-existence, explains why Old Testament writers could testify concerning Him. It also harmonises with the Scriptural teaching that both Christ and the Holy Spirit were principal efficient Agents in creating the material world. The Bible also testifies that the Son is the upholder of all things in Providence. His essential divine attributes are thus operative both in creation and providence.

The doctrine of the Incarnation signifies that the eternal Son of God took flesh that He might become our Saviour and Mediator. He who was equal with the Father became subordinate to Him through the Kenosis, for it was the Father who gave Christ authority to perform His mediatorial functions. After He had completed the tasks allotted to Him in the scheme of salvation Christ was glorified, even His human nature was exalted, and His essential Divinity, temporarily eclipsed, was once more revealed.

Christ's Divinity and Humanity are the respective properties of His divine and human natures. These properties ought to be considered separately, for it is really incorrect either to attribute divine qualities to His human nature, or vice versa, to ascribe human qualities to His divine nature. But because the properties of both natures were also the properties of the Person in whom they subsisted, there is between them a "hypostatical union" which enables us, with reference to the two natures, to speak of a "communication of properties". Thus, because He who possessed divine and human qualities was both God and man, the Scriptures frequently attribute divine qualities to His human nature and human qualities to His divine nature.

The Father is the original Source of the whole scheme of

salvation. In virtue of His infinite wisdom and love He appointed His own Son to be our Saviour and Deliverer. It is true that the Son performed all His miracles and completed His saving work by His own authority and power, but His complete dependence upon the Father is also perceptible throughout His earthly life. It could not be otherwise. Both were essentially one, so that the Son could only do what the Father willed.

Only in so far as we can exercise faith in Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God shall we be able to perceive the real significance of Christ's historical life. The Virgin Birth, His miracles, His resurrection and exaltation, reveal to the believer what His real nature was from eternity. No longer is the Cross a stumbling-block: it is the essence of the Gospel-message. It was because of His essential Divinity that Christ's death satisfied the demands of divine Justice and <sup>that</sup> ~~why~~ He was subsequently able to send the Paraclete to quicken those who were dead in their trespasses. Christ is our Refuge because He is the eternal Son of God, and for this reason He may be worshipped. No creature, however highly exalted, should be worshipped in this manner, so that only those who believe in the Saviour's essential Divinity have the right to adore Him. In their act of worship, however, Christians have the right to choose between two alternatives: they may either worship Christ as God or they may regard Him as the Mediator through whom the Father may be approached.

Owen's teaching concerning divine Justice is the foundation upon which he erects his doctrines of Law, Sin, and the Atonement. Justice is one of God's essential properties and it requires that all transgressions should be punished. It is this attribute which determines all degrees of punishment. Before punishment could be inflicted, however, it was necessary that God's sovereignty should

be ensured over His creatures, and it was for that purpose that the divine Law was originally formulated. By punishing those who transgress against this Law He preserves the dependence of His creatures upon Himself. Neither remission of sins nor eternal salvation ~~can~~ can be obtained unless divine Justice has first been satisfied.

As we move on to consider the Doctrine of the Atonement it is necessary to bear in mind that divine Justice only demands that sin should be punished; God has retained to Himself the right to choose who shall bear the punishment and when it shall be inflicted. Some men are punished while others are pardoned. This apparent anomaly, however, can be explained. Those who suffer the penalty that is their due do so because there was no other Satisfaction ~~is~~ available for them, while those who are set free are the objects of God's love towards them in Christ, having been made heirs of the benefits arising from the Satisfaction offered to divine Justice by the work and merit of the Saviour.

In the Atonement, accordingly, the Father is revealed as being both just and merciful. The fact that God is merciful proves that Mercy is one of His essential properties. But while it was necessary that God should be just, as we have already indicated, there was no need for Him to be merciful. The exercise of Mercy depends entirely upon His good pleasure. In the last resort, however, both attributes are identical. Both were operative on Calvary - Justice demanding the punishment of sin, and Mercy offering salvation to those for whom Christ had made Satisfaction.

Through~~h~~ His unique relation to the Father Christ knew the Father's Will, and so He was able to perform the duties of His prophetic office, that is, to reveal God's Will to men and to give men power to understand and to obey it. When He gave the New

Covenant the Father also gave Christ as its Mediator, who ratified it by offering His own life as a ransom for those with whom it was made. The precepts of this Covenant should not be understood in a legal sense, for no man can achieve salvation by endeavouring, through his own initiative, to obey the Law of God. On the contrary, New Covenant precepts ought to be interpreted in a "Gospel sense". True desire to obey them is the inevitable result of having been accepted by the Father for Christ's sake. Conformity with the demands of the Covenant together with enjoyment of its blessings - all are free gifts purchased by the Mediator on our behalf. Without the aid of divine grace sinful men cannot obey the Law.

The primary cause of this moral and spiritual incapacity on man's part is the fact that the human race was tainted at its source. Sin entered the world through Adam's fall. The progenitor of the human race then rebelled against his Creator and so forfeited the blessings of the Covenant which until then had existed between him and God. He was then acting as the federal head of mankind, so that all his offspring became involved in an equal measure of guilt.

This, however, did not prevent God to issue the command that men must obey the moral Law or suffer the consequences of their delinquency. The Law was accordingly imparted through Moses. The Mosaic Law was perfect because it had emanated from God Himself. Hence there was no need for Christ to make any additions to it. His task was to correct the erroneous interpretations of it, and to eliminate the burdensome additions made to it, by successive Jewish religious teachers, and, above all, to reveal to men another ground, besides that of obedience to legal maxims, upon which they could be justified before God. Once more, then, we return to consider the pivot of the whole scheme of salvation - the Atonement.



Owen teaches that Death was the penalty paid by the Son for the redemption of sinners. Thereby those held captive by the Law and by divine Justice were delivered from death and hell. The supreme value of Christ's Death and Merit was derived from the eternal Covenant between Him and the Father which appointed Him to be the Redeemer of His Church. God's infinite love caused Him to choose His own Son to bear the punishment which otherwise would have to be borne by the sinners themselves. Since human beings are finite Justice demands that they should suffer punishment of infinite duration - the penalty of eternal death. Christ, however, on account of the infinite Majesty of His divine Person, was able to satisfy those requirements by undergoing punishment of limited duration, not because His divine nature died - that, in any case, would be impossible - but because infinite value belongs to His Death.

It has already been indicated that the power of choosing who must bear the penalty of sin belongs to God. He may, as in the case of reprobates, punish the actual offenders, or, as with the elect, He may impose the penalty on One whom He has specially chosen for that purpose. The "scope" of the Atonement is determined, in the last resort, by God's eternal predestinating decree, whereby He elected a certain number out of the mass of mankind to participate in the blessings of salvation and of eternal life, and reprobated others by leaving them in their sinful condition to suffer what is their due. There is no reason to believe that all those who now enjoy the privileges of the Gospel will ultimately be saved, much less for supposing that those who have never been provided with adequate means of Grace will finally be pardoned. Divine love is universal only in the sense that He has providentially provided

liberally for the material welfare of all men. But in Christ His love is directed towards some rather than others. Proof of this may be obtained by observing how the fruits of that love appear abundantly in the lives and characters of some people, while in others there are no such indications. The Saviour's Death, accordingly, is only efficacious for those whom God has eternally predestined for salvation.

We have limited powers, even in this world, to distinguish between the elect and the reprobate, if the following principle is borne in mind: without faith no man can be saved. If faith is one of the essential means of salvation, then it is obvious that he who is without it cannot be one of God's elect. Faith is the gift of God, and it is engendered by the Holy Spirit, whose procurement was one of the chief benefits of Christ's atoning work. Through the Spirit we are united with the Saviour and made partakers of the blessings of His Cross. Through Him we enjoy the fruit of justification and are sanctified unto the likeness of Christ. "Justification" is a divine act whereby sinful men are accepted into God's favour for Christ's sake, while "Sanctification" signifies the gradual process of destroying human hostility towards God. Justification always precedes sanctification; faith always precedes regeneration. Good works are the invariable results, not the conditions, of justification. Their appearance is the necessary product of a sincere faith. Through justification God is reconciled to man, and through sanctification man is reconciled to God. Complete reconciliation, however, cannot be attained in this sinful environment, where good works can never reach perfection, and where sanctification is necessarily an unfinished work. Hence the Christian doctrine of Immortality

is necessary to express the full significance of Christ's atoning work, for it guarantees that what is now incomplete shall reach a glorious culmination in the realm of light and glory.

Finally, let us consider briefly our author's views concerning Christ's priestly and kingly offices. He asserts that Jesus Christ is the great High Priest of His Church, - One who performed His priestly functions even during His residence among men, but who, nevertheless, had to suffer in order that He might be a merciful High Priest able to sympathise with human infirmities. To Him belong all the essential attributes of a Priest, for He was chosen from among men, and He offered a Sacrifice for the sins of the elect. He Himself offered the Sacrifice, which was His human nature, upon the altar of His divine nature. After He had made the offering He entered into the Father's presence to intercede on ~~the~~ behalf of sinners. He offered the Sacrifice while He still lived among men, and by reason of that Oblation He is able to intercede on our behalf in the celestial Tabernacle above. In spite of its finite character, that Sacrifice has infinite value in the sight of God because He who offered it was infinite. After His exaltation, our High Priest became immortal, so that for evermore He can intercede on behalf of those who believe in Him.

Christ's Kingly authority is the counterpart of His divine nature. His disciples recognised His Divinity during His historical life, and so He must even then have been a King. Accordingly, no new office was conferred upon Him after His Ascension. His Kingship implies that He is both able and willing to save men, for in His regal capacity He applies the salvation which He procured for them in His priestly character. It was as a King that He formulated laws for the government of His visible Church, but His spiritual

sovereignty is universal and His Kingdom is without end.

This outline of Owen's theology will suggest to the reader what "schools" of thought had most profoundly affected him. The Genevan origin of his ideas are unmistakable, and his uncompromising Calvinism stands forth in marked contrast to the Scotist-Pelagian-Humanistic theology which emanated from the ranks of Socinianism. In the following chapters we shall endeavour to show how he defended his position against the onslaughts of what he regarded as a pernicious heresy, and to note the relative strength of his interpretation of the message of Revelation together with the inadequacy of some aspects of his teaching.

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FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO (PART TWO).

1. "Works", X. 481-624.
  2. Goold's Prefaratory Note. Ibid., 482.
  3. "Works", XII. 1-590.
  4. Owen had little sympathy with the theological views of this famous and gifted Dutch jurist. He regarded him and Vorstius as "the greatest champions of the Arminian cause" ("Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu" (1647). "Works", X. 351). Grotius' theological eminence rests upon his "Governmental Theory of the Atonement" as set forth in his "De Satisfactione Christi". It is interesting to observe that his original intention in composing that work was to confute Socinianism, and that he also attacked the teaching of Faustus Socinus in his "Defensio Fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christi, etc." Even then his orthodoxy was doubted by many. Shortly before his death (1645) he was much influenced by Socinianism, as his "Annotations on Scripture" (published in 1641, 1644, 1646, and 1650) amply indicate. (Cf. Goold's Prefaratory Note, "Works", XII. 618, and Owen's remarks in his "Review of the Annotations of Hugo Grotius", "Works", XII. 630). Our author held that Grotius' opinions concerning all the main Christian doctrines were tainted by this heresy, especially his views regarding Christ's Deity, Priesthood, and Atonement, Original Sin, Free-Will, and Justification. ("A Review of the Annotations of Hugo Grotius", "Works", XII. 629). He asserts that his expositions "fall in with those of the Socinians, and oftentimes consist in the very words of Socinus and Smalcius, and alway do the same things with them, as to the notice of the Deity of Christ in them." (Epistle Dedicatory to the "Vindiciae Evangelicae". "Works", XII. 9).
- In his preface to "The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance explained and confirmed" ("Works", XI.) Owen

accused Hammond of being under the spell of Grotius. Hammond then defended Grotius in his "Answer to the Animadversions on the Dissertations concerning the Epistles of Ignatius", to which Owen replied in his "Vindiciae Evangelicae" by indicating the affinities between Grotius and the Socinians. This led Hammond to compose his "Second Defence of Grotius", which Owen again answered in his "Review of the Annotations of Hugo Grotius". This prolonged controversy was closed with the publication of Hammond's "Continuation of the Defence of Grotius." (See Goold's Prefatory Note, "Works", XII.618).

5. "Works", II. 365-454.
  6. ~~"A Vindiciae"~~ "Works", II. 275-364. Sherlock's "Discourse concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, and on Union and Communion with Him, etc." (1674) was directed against Owen's "Communion with God" ("Works", II. 1-274), which had been published as early as 1657. It was part of a systematic attempt to destroy Owen's reputation as an author. (Owen's "Vindication", "Works", II. 277). Sherlock possessed considerable ability, but his work was so highly coloured by Socinianism and by an extreme rationalism that it made an unfavourable impression. Owen, in his "Vindication", shows that both Sherlock's assertion that God could be known apart from Christ, and his declaration that there was no need for Christ to die in order to satisfy divine punitive justice, were incompatible with Christian "fundamentals" and with Hooker's exposition of Anglican doctrine. Sherlock devoted a part of his "Defence and Continuation of the Discourse concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ" to answer him. This lengthy controversy is notable on account of the large number who took part in it. It was finally brought to a close by the publication of Sherlock's "Vindication of Mr. Sherlock against the Cavils of Mr. Danson" (1678). (Orme, "Memoirs of Owen", 380-381; Goold, Prefatory Note to Owen's "Vindication". "Works", II. 276).
  7. "Works", V. 1-400. Here he criticises Socinus and Bellarmine because of their denial that Christ's righteousness, passive and active, was the ground of a sinner's justification. Many books dealing with this subject were then issued, such as Baxter's "Aphorisms on Justification" (1649), Bull's "Apostolical Harmony" (1669), Wolsey's "Justification Evangelical" (1667), etc. Owen states, however, that "although there are at present various contests about the doctrine of justification, and many books published in the way of controversy about it, yet this discourse was written with no design to contend with or contradict any, of what sort or opinion soever. Some few passages which seem of that tendency are, occasionally inserted; but they are such as every candid reader will judge necessary." ("The Doctrine of Justification by Faith", Preface to the Reader, "Works", V. 3-4).
  8. "Works", XVIII. 6, 7, 17, etc.
  9. Preface to "Vindiciae Evangelicae", "Works", XII. 52.
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Chapter 3. - THE PLACE OF REASON IN THEOLOGY.

## A.

In the seventeenth century men were reaping the results of the Renaissance and the epoch-making discoveries of the Elizabethan age. With the emergence of the scientific spirit the old logical theory of the universe lost its appeal, and there appeared a definite tendency to regard phenomena as the results of natural forces rather than as examples of God's providential government. At the same time the prestige of Scholasticism was severely shaken when some of the bolder thinkers of the period challenged Aquinas' synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy with the divine teaching of Scripture.(1)

These factors provided a <sup>^</sup>cogential environment for the development of theological Rationalism. Persistent attempts were made by men like William Sherlock and Samuel Parker (2) to set up philosophy above revelation, and "the place of reason in theology" became one of the favourite subjects of theological controversy. The most extreme exponents of this type of Rationalism were the Socinians, whose attitude towards revelation, and whose conception of the method of attaining salvation, stood forth in marked contrast to the evangelicalism of the Reformers. In Socinianism, says Harnack, -

"there is set over against the revelation contained in the Bible - not the man who looks after God, who, sunk in sin and guilt, has no peace or blessedness - but simply man, as a mortal, but rational being, who is on the outlook for eternal life." (3)

They held that by exercising "right reason" men would be able to perceive the nature of the authority of the Bible, to appropriate its contents, to evaluate its principles, and to apply its teaching in practice. In this way they could discover the essence of Christianity, and eliminate all the worthless and irrational doctrinal material that had been accumulated by the Church throughout the ages.

The Socinian affirmation - that all dogmas should be subjected

to a rational test - influenced many who never openly admitted their indebtedness to this school of thought. One of these was Hugo Grotius, whose expositions of Scripture, as Owen showed, provided clear examples of how the Socinian criterion was applied in exegesis. After declaring that certain doctrines ought to be rejected because they did not conform with rational principles, it was argued that they could not therefore be expressed in the Bible, and that a fresh exposition was needed of the texts upon which they were erroneously based. Sometimes a text was modified or discarded even when the critical and philological evidence supported the traditional exegesis; but the usual practice was to show how a 'rational' interpretation could be obtained without straining the original grammar. It was a Socinian axiom that revelation contained nothing contrary to <sup>reason</sup> ~~Scripture~~, and, other things being equal, the fact that an interpretation of a text satisfied the demands of reason was regarded as proof that it expressed its true meaning.(4). Reason, according to Biddle, is

"the only principle that God hath implanted in us to judge between right and wrong, good and bad; and whereby we excel all other living creatures whatsoever." (5).

Many were afraid to apply their reason to religious matters because they knew that by doing so they would destroy many of their cherished tenets (6): accordingly they sought refuge in the vague assertion that only those whose minds and hearts were illuminated by the Holy Spirit could understand Scriptural truths. He adds (rather sarcastically) that those who thus consider themselves to be special objects of the Spirit's favour ought to substantiate such a claim with some definite proof! (7).

But Socinianism, in spite of its stress upon reason, was actually neither more rational nor more logical than other types of theology. Its doctrines concerning the divine attributes or the person of Christ

were not self-evident to the human mind, nor could they be logically deduced from self-evident propositions. To the modern mind, acquainted with Kant's analysis of the limits and scope of reason and with the more developed eighteenth century forms of Rationalism, its claim that all truths should be tested at the bar of reason appears naïve and even trivial. Historically, however, the movement is significant because it is "the first, and therefore it is an important attempt to establish the authority of Holy Scripture, without making an appeal to faith." (8).

The fact that the Socinians neglected to produce any precise definition of the nature and limits of reason led to a great deal of misunderstanding. This was really the point at issue between Owen and the Socinians, for both parties held that Christianity was *supra* not 'contra rationem.'(9). What Owen proclaimed to be "supra rationem" they declared to be "contra rationem". While the Socinians repudiated many traditional doctrines as irrational, Owen held that it was in the highest sense rational to accept them by faith, because they belonged to a sphere into which man's finite and corrupt reason could not penetrate. It was Owen's firm belief, therefore, that the Socinian Method considerably impoverished<sup>h</sup> the content of Christian revelation.

If the Socinian method is considered in relation to its historical background it must be granted that it possessed considerable merit. It counteracted the scholastic tendency to gloss over essential principles with an infinite variety of doctrinal subdivisions, by drawing attention to the need for distinguishing ~~xx~~ between what was essential and what was non-essential to salvation. By encouraging biblical criticism in its elementary stages it made an important contribution to the whole technique of exegesis. Finally,



through its new approach to the Bible, it inaugurated a movement which soon compelled the champions of faith and revelation to seek a sounder foundation for their beliefs: faith in the Bible as a book was dislodged and superseded by something far superior - faith in the revelation to which the Bible testifies.

B.

Owen, like the Socinians, believed that the whole of existence was rational, being the creation of 'Universal Reason' or God. Man, however, could <sup>not</sup> understand all things merely by exercising his intellect; there were three ways whereby he could assent to the truths proposed to him:-

(a) Some truths, variously described as "innate", "inbred principles of natural light", "the first rational instincts of our minds", or "the prime dictates of the light of nature", - are intuitively perceived by the human mind. Man, for instance, has intuitive knowledge of the difference between good and evil or of the fact that the whole is greater than its part. This faculty of the mind corresponds to instinct in "irrational animals". In religion we possess an innate knowledge of God's existence and we intuitively perceive that His authority over us is absolute.

(b) Further knowledge is obtained by rational deduction from intuitive perceptions or from the evidence supplied by our senses. The validity of the conclusions so reached depends upon the trustworthiness of the premises from which the argument proceeds. Thus by observing and meditating upon the works of creation and providence it is possible to discover certain truths concerning the divine nature and attributes.

(c) Finally, there is a type of knowledge that can only be obtained through faith; that is, by accepting truths merely upon testimony. This was the method employed by God in the Scriptures for revealing

Himself: "Unto this kind of revelation, 'Thus saith the Lord' is the only ground and reason of our assent; and that assent is the assent of faith, because it is resolved into testimony alone."

But although Owen recognised that knowledge was obtained through various channels, he carefully indicated that knowledge obtained in one way did not conflict with knowledge attained otherwise. For instance, if reason led us to adopt principles directly contradicting revealed truth, then reason must be defective, and if revelation, as in the case of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, was supposed to declare what really conflicted with fundamental rational principles, it could only be "a delusion".

"If any thing pretends from the one what is absolutely contradictory unto the other, or our senses as the means of them, it is not to be received ....And a supposition of the possibility of any such thing would make the ways whereby God reveals and makes known Himself to cross and interfere one with another; which would leave us in no certainty in any thing, divine or human."

These various means of obtaining knowledge of God belong to different grades. By rational deduction we perceive truths which are not intuitively perceptible, and by faith we obtain knowledge that is entirely beyond the comprehension of reason. As the great philosophers of the past, in virtue of their higher deductive powers, discovered truths concerning the divine nature of which the average man had no notion, so he who exercises faith in "the principal mysteries of the Christian religion" obtains a vision of divine things, which human reason, even in its highest form, could never attain. Nevertheless, the truths obtained through these various channels supplement one another, and ultimately form a coherent whole. They are not "equally extensive or commensurate, but are so subordinate one unto another that what is wanting unto the one is supposed by the other, unto the accomplishment of the whole and entire end of divine revelation; and the truth of God is the same in them all." (10).

## C.

Human reason, according to Owen, is very limited in scope - especially with reference to religion. Because it is finite it cannot comprehend the Infinite, and because its nature is corrupt it is even antagonistic to divine truth. It is -

"naturally unready to receive what is above it; and, as corrupted, hath an enmity thereunto"(11). "It is not only weak and limited, but depraved and corrupted; and the carnal mind cannot subject itself unto the authority of God in any supernatural revelation whatever."(12).

<sup>-re</sup>  
The<sub>a</sub> was a very close connection between Owen's teaching on the limitations of reason and his belief in the doctrine of Original Sin. Before the Fall man was divinely endowed with the divine gift of reason which enabled him to perceive and to obey the will of God. But his present reason is only a remnant of what he had in his pristine state, and even that remnant is corrupt. After sin had entered into the world man had no hope of obtaining salvation by obeying the divine will, for he had lost the ~~power~~ to obey. Hence God caused the Covenant of Grace to operate that he might be rescued from his otherwise hopeless position. Human nature has no power to understand this Covenant; its reason is simply a vestige of what existed prior to the Fall, and so it has only a faint idea of the scheme in vogue during Adam's innocency.

"It is not likely that our reason, as now corrupted, should be willing to embrace that which it knew nothing of in its best condition ... for it hath no faculty or power but what it hath derived from that state."(13).

Hence man's natural reason considers the Gospel to be unreasonable and illogical, and it vainly tries to imagine other ways of attaining salvation, as is evident in all forms of Rationalism, and especially in Socinianism. The latter supposes reason to be capable of judging Gospel truths; it exalts philosophy above Revelation. This procedure can only lead to atheism:

"To affirm that ... we may reject what is really above reason,

on a supposition that <sup>(162)</sup> it is contrary unto reason, is to renounce the Gospel, and therewith all divine revelations." (14)

To make this carnal and debased reason the measure of divine truth was the height of impudence. It divested revelation of all its glory by reducing it into something that could be understood by man's corrupt intelligence. Socinianism has led us to this impasse.

"The Lord Christ, it would have in His whole Person to be but a mere man, in His obedience and suffering to be but an example, in His doctrine to be confined unto the capacity and comprehension of carnal reason, and the holiness which He communicates by the sanctification of His Spirit to be but that moral virtue which is common among men as the fruit of their own endeavours." (15).

Thus it pours contempt upon the Holy Spirit and His operations, and undermines the foundations of Christian faith and piety.

Owen then asserts that many fundamental Christian doctrines are not self-evident to man's reason; neither can they be discovered by a rational process of deduction from innate principles. Insight into saving truth can only be obtained through faith and through ~~the~~ spiritual "illumination", which is "that supernatural knowledge that any man hath or may have of the mind and will of God, as revealed unto him by supernatural means, for the law of his faith, life, and obedience." (16).

Such doctrines as those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection of the Dead, cannot be accepted on purely rational grounds. (17). They can only be received by faith, which is the gift of God, and which differs essentially from the assent which reason gives when satisfied with logical arguments. (18).

He consistently adhered to the Calvinistic argument that all truths necessary for salvation were revealed in the Bible, and that only faith could receive them. Only by implicitly believing in the contents of Scripture was it possible to obtain religious security. (19) If Scriptural truths could not be received without reason comprehending them, it would be necessary to say whose reason was qualified to do so. That, however, would be impossible because each man's reason

((163)).

differs from his neighbour's.<sup>(20)</sup> Therefore "it is the highest reason in things of pure revelation to captivate our understandings to the authority of the Revealer." (21). What has been revealed must be possible. (22). This maxim should always be remembered:-

"Whatever God, who is prima veritas, hath revealed is true, whether we can comprehend the things revealed or no. " (23).

Perfect reason would undoubtedly be able to understand all truths: but since our reason is weak, finite, and corrupt, we must humbly recognise its limitations and confess that we are incapable of understanding many revealed truths. In the following paragraph Owen states his position very forcibly:-

"Though we will not admit of any thing that is contrary to reason, yet the least intimation of a truth by divine revelation will make me embrace it, although it should be contrary to the reason of all the Socinians in the world. Reason in the abstract, or the just measure of the answering of one thing to another, is of great moment - but reason - that is, what is pretended to be so, or appears to be so unto this or that man, especially in and about things of divine revelation - is of very small importance (of none at all) where it riseth up against the express testimonies of Scripture, and these multiplied, to their mutual confirmation and explanation." (24)

Only those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit can receive "evangelical knowledge", which is the material of evangelical theology. Such a theology is indeed -

"a spiritual gift imparted by the Holy Spirit, in the name of Christ to the minds of believers, or rather of those regenerated by the divine grace, by which they are made wise, skilled, and intelligent, in the knowledge of the mystery of godliness, or of God and His will as revealed in Christ through the Gospel." (25).

In pre-Reformation days the faith was corrupted because human speculative theories were allowed to assume priority over the Scriptures. Since men are constantly subjected to this temptation they ought to safeguard themselves against it by diligently studying the Bible. (26) There will they find the Word of God, for the Bible was not produced by the literary and rational qualifications of men but by the Holy Spirit, who enables men to comprehend the spiritual significance of its teaching, the validity of its doctrines, and the harmony of the faith. (27).

Owen testifies that he always bore this in mind when composing his commentary on "Hebrews": "After all searching and reading, prayer and assiduous meditation on the text have been my only reserve, and far the most useful means of light and assistance."(28).

Commentators and exegetes were in every age divinely appointed to help others in their search for truth; but in relation to the Bible commentaries ought to occupy only a secondary position.(29).

D.

In view of all that he said concerning the finiteness and depravity of human reason, it is natural to ask,- Did he ascribe any value to human reason and learning? This question has already been partially answered, for we saw that he affirmed that knowledge of God's existence and authority was self-evident to reason, and that it was possible by rational deduction from premises intuitively perceptible by the mind, or from evidence supplied through our senses, to obtain further knowledge concerning creation, providence, and the divine attributes. He also maintained that it was through his reason that man understood the meaning of the propositions which he accepted by faith. It was his duty to exercise his reason that he might see how revealed truths cohered and harmonised. Owen would have been in complete agreement with Brunner's affirmation, that

"faith is not that suicidal rigid sacrificium intellectus for which it is often mistaken; it does not imply the denial of the intellect as such, but only its limitation and control."(30).

This point received his attention when he was engaged in controversy with the Roman Catholic, John Vincent Cane. The latter affirmed that men <sup>were</sup> so much under the influence of passion and personal interest that they could not exercise their reason impartially, and that in religious controversy the appeal to authority, and not to reason, was far more likely to attain beneficial results.

"When opinions once rise, there is some reason indeed in power, but no power at all in reason to assuage or stifle them."(31).

Reason might occasionally assist weak believers, but it could not

engender faith. Religion must be received upon authority - the authority of Christ - and it invariably depends upon faith. No man possessing unusual rational insight could invent a religion, because others would have no means of knowing whether or not it was truly rational. Moreover, on purely rational grounds it was possible to argue in favour of more than one religion. Those who rely upon their own reason virtually deny the Incarnation, the true significance of which consists in the fact that God, perceiving men bewildered by a variety of religious theories, took compassion upon them by sending One who would reveal to them the Truth. All human intellects should henceforth submit to this revelation, and he who refuses to do so, preferring human reason to faith, -

"doth disable divine Wisdom, oppose His ordination, and contemn His goodness unto mankind, endeavouring to raise again that mist of philosophical confusion, which the Sun of brightness dissipated with His presence, and the only authority of His revealed will."(32).

Owen's conception of revelation was fundamentally similar to Cane's, for he also believed that revelation came from without, demanding that reason, indeed the whole personality, should surrender to it. But he possessed keener psychological insight than his opponent into the actual part played by reason in appropriating revelation. He argued that Christianity did not deprive man of his reason, the divine prerogative that distinguished him from the brute. In spite of its defects, reason perceives the wisdom/implicitly receiving all divine revelations; it can evaluate truths objectively revealed, and help us to obey them. Although by nature it revolts against Scriptural revelation, yet, once faith is exercised, it is transformed and becomes the means whereby we are able to understand the meaning of the propositions in which that revelation is contained. It then surrenders itself in its lower, defective, limited form to the dictates of "Universal Reason".

"I can neither submit to the truth of **things** to be believed, nor live upon them or according unto them, unless I understand the propositions wherein they are expressed; which is the work we assign to reason."(33).

In addition, questions of a non-fundamental character, such as those pertaining to Church government and worship, may to some extent be ~~be~~ determined on rational lines.(34). Owen indeed encouraged all intellectual attempts to know God, and regarded them as capable of yielding valid results, so long as they did not conflict with revelation. It is praiseworthy to develop our rational capacities (such as they are) to the full, and if we persevere to do this, we shall ~~xxxx~~ obtain much valuable help in biblical exegesis.

"When the minds of men are confined in a good habit of judgment by the rules of the art of reasoning about the ordinary ways and methods of it, it is of great advantage in the investigation of the sense of any writer, even of the Scripture itself; and those ordinarily who shall undertake the interpretation of any series of Scripture discourses without some ability in this science will find themselves oftentimes entangled and at a loss, when by virtue of it they might be at liberty and free." (35).

It is possible, in view of this, to understand why he fought so hard for the retention of educational establishments during the Commonwealth period. His pietism, his championship of revelation and faith against the rationalism of Anglicans and Socinians, and his ~~s~~ stress upon the need for complete dependence upon divine grace, did ~~not~~ make him despise man's intellectual life or ~~to~~ disparage human learning. At first sight it is somewhat surprising to find that, while a philosopher like Hobbes advocated the complete suppression of the Universities (36), Owen and like-minded Puritans strove to uplift them from the degradation into which they had fallen during the Civil War. When he was vice-chancellor of Oxford, the views of a few Puritan extremists, who held that all non-biblical learning was damnable and all educational establishments useless, caused him much personal anxiety. The Barebones' Parliament, for instance,



gravely deliberated upon the propriety of extinguishing all schools of learning and titles of honour "as not agreeing with Christian simplicity" (37), and those who were prepared to defend the cause of learning seem to have been comparatively few in number. "Nay", cried Owen, when resigning from office, "such was the pitch of madness, that to have stood up for gownsmen would have been regarded as a violation of religion and piety." (38). If the number of celebrated men who received their tuition at Oxford during those years is any indication, then it must be concluded that his efforts on behalf of learning were truly successful. Even Clarendon testified that he "found that University...abounding in excellent learning, and little inferior to what it was before its desolation," (39) while Trevelyan states that "in spite of so many disturbing influences, the years 1640-1660 represent one of the great periods of educational enthusiasm and improvement...It is difficult to say whether the Universities were best under the restrictive system of Laud, or under that of the Parliamentary Commissioners; but the schools of England certainly benefited by the Great Rebellion." (40).

But the learning sponsored by Owen was of the traditional, scholastic kind. He ignored the speculative theories of the new philosophical movement connected with the names of Descartes and his followers. "The Discourse on Method" was published in 1637, and at Cambridge Cartesian influence was already perceptible, yet at Oxford, according to Locke (who entered Christ Church in 1652), no radical improvement in the fundamental principles of education had yet been introduced (41), and the only philosophy known there was "the peripatetic, perplexed with obscure terms and useless questions." (42).

#### E.

The Socinian system, with all its emphasis on "right reason", was actually no more rational than Owen's. It made no attempt to divest Christianity of supernatural elements, such as the Virgin Birth, the Miracles, and the Resurrection; and even when it

rejected traditional dogmas as contrary to reason, it frequently happened that it had to introduce others equally opaque to human reason. While orthodoxy, for instance, based its belief in the authority of Christ's message on the dogma which proclaimed the Son's eternal and essential oneness with the Father, many of the Socinians based it on the supposition that Christ obtained that message by ascending into Heaven at some point between His Baptism and His appearance in public as a religious teacher. Hence the true significance of the movement consists not in the actual content of its teaching but in its tendency - a tendency that has gained momentum during the intervening centuries. By appealing to reason, a faculty that is common to all men, and by giving pre-eminence to the ethical aspects of Christianity, they tended to reduce the Christian religion to the level of general revelation. This tendency is evident in all forms of Rationalism and Mysticism, and they all reject the orthodox doctrine of Original Sin. They are marked by the "self-confidence of the man who is alienated from God, in the strength which remains to him, in the possibilities which he still possesses, in the confidence which arises out of the fact that ... sin is neither confessed nor admitted."(47).

The truth for which Owen stood ~~that~~ - that in religion the scope of <sup>reason</sup> ~~religion~~ is limited, that many religious truths lie beyond reason and cannot be comprehended by it - must be retained if the true nature of Christianity is to be preserved. Although his perpetual tendency to identify revelation with the Bible as a book ~~and~~ appears naïve to the modern mind, yet his point of view was fundamentally correct: rational argument is valid only within a particular sphere, and outside that sphere faith alone can penetrate. "Faith in revelation...breaks through the intellectual process, and asserts that eternal truth is bound up with an event which took place in time."(44).

Owen, however, was too much hampered by the old scholastic distinction between the truths of natural religion and those of ~~xx~~ revealed religion. By maintaining that certain theological premisses were intuitively perceptible to reason, that other truths could be discovered by rational deduction, but that the main Christian dogmas could only be received through faith, he meant that we ought to supplement what has been received by "the light of nature" with revealed truths. Such a method can only lead to inconsistency and confusion. Moreover, it is questionable whether any self-evident theological axioms are obtainable, at least none that are of any value. Those that may be discovered are so abstract that no concrete conclusions can be drawn from them. An act of faith is needed in the revelation to which the Bible testifies before Christians can obtain definite knowledge concerning God's being and attributes. Once certain truths are believed, it is possible to employ logic and reason to test their mutual coherence and to eliminate all contradictions. By giving primacy to faith in religion Owen laid for himself a much firmer theological foundation than the Socinians, who sought to give reason the position occupied by faith in traditional orthodoxy. Reason can have no material on which to exercise itself until faith has been exerted. Hence faith in religion is always primary, reason only secondary. If we ~~wx~~ assume that Reality is governed by a single intelligible principle, and if our faith is grounded in Reality, then our faith should enable us to give a truly rational interpretation of existence. Faith and reason will then co-operate.

"The really rational doctrine", writes Quick, "is not one which can be logically demonstrated to be true, but one which, when it is believed as true, exhibits an intelligible order in the whole scheme of things and makes coherent sense of our experience."(45).

The Socinians had <sup>set</sup> themselves the impossible task of demonstrating

by means of logic the nature and validity of the Christian message. It is our conviction that their system, tested in the light of experience, is not so 'rational' as that of the Puritan divine.

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FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE (PART TWO).

1. Davies, "The Early Stuarts", 357-359.
2. William Sherlock wrote "A Discourse concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, and on Union and Communion with Him" against Owen. See Goold's note ("Works", II. 276) to "A Vindication of Some Passages in a Discourse concerning Communion with God, from the Exceptions of William Sherlock". Samuel Parker, who professed to despise all enthusiasm, regarded Owen and like-minded Puritans as misguided sectaries. For further details see Goold's note ("Works", XIII., 344) prefaced to "A Survey of a Discourse concerning Ecclesiastical Polity" and Owen's references to him in "Pneumatologia; or a Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit", Books II and III ("Works", III).
3. Harnack, "History of Dogma", VII., 139.
4. "Racovian Catechism", 1 ff. Cf. Thesis, 43.
5. Biddle, "Preface to A Brief Catechism for Children" (No pagin.).
6. Biddle, Preface (no pagin.) to "Brevis Disquisitio".
7. Biddle, "Brevis Disquisitio", Chap. 3, 5-9.
8. Harnack, Op. cit., 140.
9. Ibid., 142, Foot-note 1.
10. "The Reason of Faith; or, An Answer unto that Inquiry, 'Wherefore we believe the Scripture to be the Word of God:'" (1677). "Works", IV., 82-88.
11. "The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ." (1677). "Works", V., 45.
12. "The Reason of Faith, etc." "Works", IV., 54.
13. "The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, etc." "Works", V., 45.
14. "The Nature of Apostasy from the Profession of the Gospel and the Punishment of Apostates declared." "Works", VII., 128. (1676).
15. "Pneumatologia; or, A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit". "Works", III., 371. (1674).
16. "The Reason of Faith, etc." "Works", IV., 7.
17. Ibid., 54.
18. Ibid., 55.
19. Cf., for instance, "Vindiciae Evangelicae". (1655) "Works", XII., 139.
20. "Vindiciae Evangelicae". "Works", XII., 68.
21. "A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity." (1669). "Works", II., 412. Cf. "Sunesis Pneumatike; or, the Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God as revealed in His Word, with assurance therein." (1678) "Works", IV., 224.
22. "Vindiciae Evangelicae". "Works", XII., 237.
23. Ibid., 209.
24. "A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity." "Works", II., 412.
25. "Theologoumena Pantodapa; sive de Natura, Ortu, Progressu, et Studio, Verae Theologiae". See Goold's Prefaratory Note. "Theologia ideo evangelica, est 'donum spirituale mentibus

- hominum fidelium, seu per gratiam Dei renatorum, a Spiritu Sancto nomine Christi inditum, quo sapientes, prudentes, et intelligentes fiunt, in agnitione mysterii pietatis, seu Dei atque voluntatis ipsius in Christo per evangelium revelatae" etc. ("Works", XVII., 441).
26. Ibid., last chapter.
  27. "Vindiciæ Evangelicæ". "Works", XII., 51.
  28. "An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews." "Works", XVIII., 9.
  29. Goold's Prefaratory Note to Owen's "Pro Sacris Scripturis Adversus Hujus Temporis Fanaticos Exercitationes Apologeticæ Quatuor." (1658) "Works", XVI., 425. Cf. "A Vindication of the Animadversions on 'Fiat Lux' " (1663). "Works", XIV., 276-277.
  30. Brunner, "The Mediator", 43.
  31. Cane, "Fiat Lux", 49, 53.
  32. Ibid., 137-147.
  33. "Animadversions on a Treatise entitled 'Fiat Lux'". (1662). "Works", XIV., 76.
  34. This is especially true of his treatment of "Toleration". Cf. "The Present Distresses on Nonconformists Examined" (1667). "Works", XIII., 579-582.
  35. "Sunesis Pneumatike, etc." "Works", IV., 223-224.
  36. Bourne, "Life of Locke", I., 32; Godwin, "History of the Commonwealth", IV., 94.
  37. Neal, "History of the Commonwealth", IV., 66.
  38. Oratio V. - "Imo eo deventum erat dementiæ, ut e partibus gentis togatæ stetisse, violatæ religionis et pietatis nomine censeretur." "Works", XVI., 509.
  39. Clarendon, "History of the Rebellion", V., 483. Cf. Neal, Op. cit., 245.
  40. Trevelyan, "England under the Stuarts", 317.
  41. It was through Locke's own influence that the traditional scholasticism of the universities was superseded by modern philosophy. Clark, "The Later Stuarts", 397.
  42. Bourne, "Life of Locke", I., 48.
  43. Brunner, Op. cit., 152.
  44. Ibid., 42-43.
  45. Quick, "Doctrines of the Creed", 16.
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