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Puritanism

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Editorial: Learning from the Puritans

Stephen J. Wellum

Repeatedly, numerous cultural commentators have observed the difficulty of convincing postmodern people of the importance of anything prior to 1970. For example, Allan Bloom in his famous *The Closing of the American Mind* makes this very point in regard to university students. Given the wonders of current technology, he notes, many students assume that everything of real historical significance has occurred only recently. Few experience nostalgia for anything further back than the middle of the twentieth century. In a similar fashion, C. S. Lewis, a couple of generations ago, made the same point in regard to our preference for books. Instead of the "old books" we prefer what is current and trendy, and sadly, as Lewis astutely observed, this preference for the "new" is nowhere more rampant than in theology.

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What are some of the implications of neglecting the "old" for the "new?" There are many. But one disastrous consequence, which Lewis powerfully argues, is that it leads to reinforcing our own cultural blinders and re-inventing the proverbial wheel:

> None of us can fully escape this blindness [of our age], but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books.... The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only be reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the *same* mistakes ("On the Reading of Old Books," in *God in the Dock* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970], 202).

Taking Lewis's advice to heart, we have devoted this issue of *SBJT* to reflecting upon what we can learn from the "old," namely the Puritans, for the doing of theology and for the life and health of the church today.

Why focus on the Puritans? The answer to this question should be obvious, but, unfortunately, given our lack of knowledge of the past, our

familiarity with the Puritans is lacking. In fact, the name, "Puritan(s)" conjures up a variety of images for people. Probably the most predominant image today, as in the seventeenth century when the word was often used in a pejorative sense, is that of a fanatical, conceited religious person and social extremist. However, this image is nothing but a terrible distortion of the truth. Even though Puritans were not a monolithic group with the exact same theological convictions in every matter, those who were considered part of it represent some of the most devoted, conscientious, theologically driven, and Christ-centered individuals the church has known. In their writings and in their lives, the Puritans are fellow believers from a previous era with which the contemporary church needs to become familiar and which we neglect to our spiritual impoverishment.

"Puritanism," as a broad movement, is generally dated between the years 1550-1700 (though not limited to this period), primarily located in England and in New England (though its influence far surpassed these places). Puritanism was a movement that lived between a crucial transition era in Western church history—between the end of the medieval era and the impact of the Reformation and the important post-Reformation era and the rise of the modern world with all of its theological, social, and political challenges. Even though Puritanism was diverse, "Puritans" were united in emphasizing personal conversion, they rejoiced in God's sovereign grace in election, and as a result, their hearts' desire was to live their lives to God's glory. Puritans also sought to establish a pure church modeled on the pattern of the NT and thus they emphasized a true spirituality grounded in Scripture, centered in Christ and all of his glorious cross work, and lived out by the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, they sought to live out their Christian convictions in very practical terms—individually before God, in their families, in their work, and in the larger society. In fact, even though Puritans differed in their sociopolitical views, they were concerned to make their communities and thus the nation a model Christian society as they sought to bring all of their thought and lives captive to Christ and the gospel.

Probably what the contemporary, evangelical church can learn most from the Puritans is how to live a whole life to God's glory. Four examples will suffice. First, their writings on the Christian life—Christian spirituality, communion with God, meditating on Scripture with the goal of applying God's Word to every area of our lives—are a needed antidote to our present spiritual poverty and superficiality. Second, their theological works which unpack and defend the great truths of the Christian faith—the doctrines of the Trinity, original sin, the person and work of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and so on—are must reading for today given our massive theological compromises in so many of these areas. Third, their love for the purity and holiness of the church, their gospel ministry, and their encouragement to Christian ministers to preach and teach the Scriptures in season and out, desperately need to be heard today, especially by those who sense God's call on their lives to serve the church of the living God. Fourth, their example of how to contend for the truth and joyfully live their lives in light of eternity especially in the face of suffering and persecution is something the evangelical church has to learn. The Puritans experienced systematic persecution for their convictions; what we today think of as comforts were unknown to them; they had no modern medicines, social security, insurance; and they lived amidst high rates of child mortality, disease, discomfort, and pain. Yet, they lived lives of joy; they viewed themselves as pilgrims traveling to the Celestial City; and they knew how to live because they knew how to die in Christ.

Even though this issue of *SBJT* can only begin to scratch the surface in regard to Puritanism, it is my prayer that it will challenge us to learn from them, not to idolize them nor even fail to critique them, but to learn with them how to stand for the truth and to live lives that wonderfully reflect the glory of God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. No greater tribute to them could be made than to follow their example in this regard.

Reformed Orthodoxy in Britain

Carl R. Trueman

INTRODUCTION

"Puritanism," like so many "isms" throughout history, has proved very difficult to define, and I am aware that no definitive solution will be found in this essay. Thus, what I offer here is a brief theological and ecclesiastical history of the twin poles that are, with different degrees of emphasis, often seen as constitutive of the Puritan identity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: religious experience, which separates the true believer from one with only an intellectual faith; and the development of Reformed Orthodoxy, particularly as it played out in the ecclesiological struggles in England during this time. Indeed, the key theological debates in Britain at the time, at least as they impacted on the wider history of England Scotland, and Ireland, tended on the whole to address matters of church and state, and the nature of liturgical reform, rather than the kind of issues which we see, for example, in Dutch church history of the time. Thus, while British theologians did produce a vast amount of literature on classical theological themes, such as the doctrine of scripture, God, Christology, and predestination, much of the focus of public debate was on differences in polity and liturgy between Erastians, Presbyterians and Independents. Historians have tended to focus on these matters of being of primary interest.[1] Thus, Puritan studies, a field where perhaps one might have expected more of a theological concern, has been dominated on the whole by those whose interests are more with the sociology and psychology of the movement(s) than with its doctrinal contribution.[2]

The last twenty years have, however, witnessed the growth in interest among academics in the theological writings of Britain during this time. In part, this is clearly the result of the impact of the wider growth in this area fuelled by the scholarly contributions of Richard A. Muller to the broader field of post-Reformation theological studies, contributions which specifically integrate discussions of British theologians such as Samuel Rutherford, James Ussher, John Owen, and Edward Leigh (among many others) into the wider treatment of

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continental reformed Orthodoxy.[3]

In the wake of Muller's work, a number of writers have either pursued historical theological studies of English and Scottish figures which seek to apply his insights to specific English figures or debates, or have sought to integrate sensitivity to issues of historical theology with the more traditional social, political, and literary interests of Puritan studies. The picture that has emerged of Reformed Orthodox intellectual life in Britain in recent scholarship, even as it acknowledges the differences in social and political contexts, has underlined both the close connection between British theology and that of the continent at the time, and the essential catholicity of the British Reformed relative to their patristic and medieval antecedents.[4]

THE EARLY ENGLISH REFORMATION, 1509-58

The reign of Henry VIII was marked by a break with the Roman church but rather equivocal commitment to Protestantism. Indeed, it was not until the reign of Edward VI (1547-53) that Protestantism found confessional status in England with the First and Second Books of Common Prayer (1549; 1552) and the formulation of the Forty-Two Articles of 1552, produced by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. The Articles were essentially Reformed, particularly in their view of the Lord's Supper but their composition at the end of Edward's reign meant that they never achieved normative status.

Nevertheless, the lack of formal confessional status did not mean that English theologians were not already debating Reformed theology. The ebb and flow of Protestant fortunes both in England under Henry VIII had guaranteed that, by the time of Edward's reign, England had not only seen many of its own most progressive theological minds go into exile on the continent but then return, replete with continental Reformed thought. Thus, during the reign of Edward VI, John Hooper and Bartholomew Traheron vigorously debated predestination, the former having been exiled in Bullinger's Zurich, the latter in Calvin's Geneva, with their respective cities of exile shaping their approach to the subject. Bullinger was strongly opposed to the double predestinarianism of Traheron, and indeed appears to have used synergistic passages from Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* as the textual source for some of his arguments.[5]

In addition to the return of domestic theologians, England also benefited at this time from the presence of foreign intellectuals, fleeing the continent to avoid Charles V's anti-Protestant policies. Thus, in the early 1550s, leading continental Reformers were also to be resident in England: for example, among others, Peter Martyr Vermigli took the chair of divinity at Oxford, Martin Bucer the chair at Cambridge, and John Laski pastored a church of exiles in London. These men were significant in the domestic debates among Reformed theologicans. Bucer was particularly influential in shaping Cranmer's views of polity and John Bradford's views on predestination; and Laski's presence encouraged the more radically Reformed, such as John Hooper (ca. 1500-1555), to press for more thorough Reformation of the Anglican Church.[6]

One final note regarding Edward's reign was the emergence of debates surrounding church practices, specifically the use of clerical vestments, the practice of kneeling at communion, and the nature and status of the Book of Common Prayer as defining the English Reformation. Both John Hooper and the exiled Scotsman, John Knox (ca. 1510-72), protested the use of vestments, and the latter was also notorious for his last-minute intervention on the Second Book of Common Prayer's prescription of kneeling as the appropriate posture for reception of the sacramental elements.[7] For both men, these things were not prescribed by scripture and were thus to be regarded as idolatrous. In making such a case, they were effectively adumbrating the later Regulative Principle of worship, as well as implicitly raising questions about

the extent of state power with regard to church affairs. These were to be the most important issues in British church life for the next century and marked one element of what we might call Puritanism: the desire to see further reformation within the Church of England.

The death of Edward in 1553 brought his Catholic sister, Mary, to the throne and, in the years that followed, persecution of Protestants meant exile for some and death for others. Very little in the way of theological significance was produced by the Reformed during her reign, though it is worth noting the debate that took place in the Tower of London between John Bradford and a shadowy group known as "the Free Will Men" who, as the name suggests, were radical Pelagians upset that the Reformed prisoners enjoyed gambling to pass the time. Bradford's defences of providence and predestination in this context show the influence of Bucer and probably Calvin.[8]

It is also significant that John Knox, by then pastor of the English exile church in Frankfurt am Main, clashed with a group of Prayer Book loyalists over his liturgical reforms within the congregation, and consequently lost his pastorate. Again, this was an ominous foreshadowing of problems to come.[9]

THE ELIZABETHAN ERA

During the reign of Elizabeth, numerous significant developments took place relative to Reformed orthodoxy. First, in 1559 Parliament passed both the Act of Supremacy which re-established the independence of the Anglican Church from Rome and established the monarch as its Supreme Governor, and the Act of Uniformity, which established the Book of Common Prayer as the church's official liturgy and required certain church attendance from the people. In 1563, the church was then given a sharper doctrinal identity when the Thirty-Nine Articles, a modification of the earlier Forty-Two Articles, passed into law and thus established Reformed Protestant theology as the official position of church and state.

While the Articles embodied a broad Reformed framework for theology, they were not the major source of tension in the 1560s and 1570s in England. Rather, the major controversial foci were, again, the use of vestments and the related issue of state power vis-à-vis church liturgical practice and discipline. Thus, in the 1560s and 1570s, there were significant struggles between those who wished to see an aesthetically simplified form of worship and practice, including increased freedom for the church to determine these matters without giving the state final authority, and those who wished to maintain both the stipulations of the Prayer Book and the prerogative of the state to enforce such.[10]

In addition, the disputes on these points were intensified by the Geneva Bible, an English translation first produced in 1557 (New Testament) and 1560 (complete Bible). Many of the men associated with the work were English exiles in Geneva who went on to become prominent figures in the struggles over vestments in the Elizabethan church. In fact, it was not so much the translation that was to prove so controversial as the marginal notes which advocated politically and ecclesiastically radical interpretations of key passages, most famously perhaps on the Hebrew midwives deception in Exod 1:19. This test was interpreted as legitimating the telling of lies to tyrannical rulers, a piece of commentary which was to be particularly distressing to Elizabeth's successor, James I, and which plays directly to those within the church who wished to resist royal incursions on what they understood to be the sphere of the church's sovereign power. The immediate impact of the Geneva Bible has probably been overestimated but, after its first English printing in 1576, it rapidly became the most influential English translation.[11]

William Perkins

If English Puritanism in the sixteenth century produced a theologian of international stature, it was William Perkins (1558-1602), a Cambridge theologian whose works covered the full range

of Reformed doctrinal and practical concerns. Indeed, it has been argued that it was the market for his books in the Low Countries that essentially started the tradition of Dutch translations of English works.[12] He is perhaps most famous for his appropriation and elaboration of Theodore Beza's *Tabula praedestinationis* in his own *A Golden Chaine*, which was a schematic essay on the order of salvation. Perkins's modification of Beza involved a careful Christological focus, coordinating the elements of the order of salvation with the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ; and he was also much more enamoured with the theories of logic and memory of Peter Ramus, again evident in the chart.[13]

Perkins also produced works of casuistry and practical divinity, something which would become an important part of Puritan literary production, marking the typical dual emphasis among many of the British Reformed Orthodox on doctrinal precision and experimental piety.[14] Indeed, after Perkins, casuistry became quite a Puritan phenomenon, with perhaps the greatest example being provided by Richard Baxter.[15] It also provided one of the strangest ecumenical alliances of the time, at least on the printed page, when Puritan Edmund Bunny reprinted a casuistical book by Jesuit Robert Parson, along with an additional essay of his own.[16]

The Lambeth Articles

England, however, was not immune to the kind of debates affecting continental Reformed Orthodoxy, particularly with references to predestination. The Thirty Nine Articles, while clearly Reformed in original intention, were nonetheless much less precise than other similar confessions, such as the Belgic or Second Helvetic. By the 1590s, there were those within ministerial orders who were willing to criticize the received wisdom on issues such as grace and predestination. In particular, this was true of the group centered around Peter Baro (1534-99), the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. Of course, the English situation was in part a function of developments on the continent, with tensions on issues such as double predestination becoming increasingly prominent in Lutheran and Reformed conflict, as in the collapse of the colloquy at Montbeliard in 1586. But such became the sensitivities in England that any questioning of double predestination was sometimes liable to place one under suspicion or troublemaking.[17]

While there had been rumblings of trouble regarding the teaching of predestination in the 1580s,[18] matters really came to a head in April 1595, when a member of Peter Baro's Cambridge circle, William Barrett, of Caius College, preached a sermon (now lost) in which he denied the irrestibility of grace, and also attacked the corollaries of assurance and reprobation. The matter brought him to the attention of the authorities and he was forced to recant (though he later recanted the recantation). Most significantly, the sermon brought to a head the conflict between the Baro party and William Whitaker (1548-95), Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, and this culminated in Archbishop Whitgift's promulgation of the Lambeth Articles in November 1595.

The Articles, the result of a conference involving Whitaker, Whitgift, and the Cambridge Heads, were nine brief statements, in Latin, asserting, among other things, double predestination (Art. 1), sin as the basis for condemnation (Art. 4), the reality of full assurance (Art. 6) and the impotence of human beings relative to salvation (Art. 9).[19] V. C. Miller makes the point that there were two agendas behind the Articles: Whitgift wished to see them as a basis for clarifying the Thirty-Nine Articles and thus bringing an end to the conflict at Cambridge; Whitaker and the Heads wished to see them as connecting the Anglican Church to the continental churches by highlighting agreement on the points which they addressed.[20] Arguably, the Articles ended up achieving neither: Peter Baro subsequently launched an explicit attack on Whitaker in a sermon in January 1596 and, in a manner which highlights the problem of

the theological meaning of their confession faced by Anglicans at the time, used the Thirty Nine Articles, specifically Articles XVII (Of Predestination and Election) and XXXI (Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross) to justify his position;[21] and Elizabeth I intervened to make sure that the Articles were not widely circulated on the grounds that she wished to avoid further contention over predestination, "a matter tender and dangerous to weak and ignorant minds."[22]

In sum, by the end of Elizabeth's reign, Reformed theology was the official position of the established Church of England, but the situation was far from peaceful or settled. Issues such as the necessity and legitimacy of clerical vestments, the nature of church government, and the meaning of the theology of the Thirty Nine Articles, had all proved to be ongoing sources of tension, and this was to continue into the seventeenth-century.

THE REIGN OF JAMES I (1603-25)

When Elizabeth I died without issue, James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English throne in 1603, becoming James I of England. A new religious and political situation was created which required one monarch to forge a religious policy which would assist good government of his three kingdoms, England, Scotland, and Ireland. While James himself appears to have been basically Reformed in theology and, indeed, no theological slouch himself, he was no Puritan and also a firm believer in the King's right to control the church. This was signaled perhaps most clearly at the very start of his reign when, in response to the Millenary Petition (a petition signed by ca. 1000 ministers, calling for a more thorough reformation of the Church of England) he called the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, where he met with leading Anglicans, including Laurence Chaderton, a Puritan. The outcome of the Conference was disappointing from a Puritan perspective, with the only achievement being the commissioning of what would be published in 1611 as the Authorized, or King James Version, of the Bible. The equivocal nature of this for the Puritans would lead ultimately to the sidelining of the Geneva Bible, particularly hated by James because of the marginal notes justifying rebellion against tyrants.

Sabbatarianism

One of the distinctives of British Puritan Reformed piety over against its continental counterpart, was its vigorous Sabbatarianism. This emerged during the reign of Elizabeth, but became a focal point of intense struggle in the reign of James.[23] Of particular note in this regard was James's publication of the Declaration, or Book, of Sports in 1617-18, which defined which sports could be played on Sunday and other Holy Days, and which was clearly designed as a means of provoking the Puritans and undermining the piety for which they stood.[24] Charles I reissued the book in 1633, with a slightly expanded list of legitimate Sabbath recreations. The declaration ensured that Sabbatarianism would be firmly fixed as a theological and ecclesiastical identity marker among the Puritans.[25]

The Five Articles of Perth

In the same year as he was provoking the Puritans with his policy on the Sabbath, James also promulgated the Five Articles of Perth, imposing English ecclesiastical practice on the Scottish kirk. Kneeling was to be required at communion, private baptisms were to be allowed, the sacrament could be reserved for the ill, confirmation was to be administered by a bishop, and certain Holy Days were to be observed. In other words, the practice of the Scottish Presbyterian church was to be made to look more like English Episcopalianism, frustrating the hopes of the more radical Scots and English, who had hoped the English church would become more Scottish in structure and practice. This set the context for the development of increasingly radical Presbyterianism.

The Irish Articles

Perhaps the single most important British con-

fessional development during the reign of James I was the production of the Irish Articles of 1615, produced as the result of a decision by the convocation of the Irish church which met between 1613 and 1625.[26] There is some debate about who authored the Articles, but it is most likely that they are the product of the pen of James Ussher (1581-1656), later to be Archbishop of Armagh. The Articles are the result of at least two impulses. First, the Irish church was itself beginning to develop a separate institutional identity, and the formulation of its own articles of religion was a logical step in this process.[27] Second, the sufficiency of the Thirty Nine Articles as a creedal formula had been called into question by the debates of the 1580s and 1590s relative to predestination, and thus it was also seen as advantageous to produce a more thorough doctrinal statement with the intention of closing some of the perceived loopholes.

Broadly speaking, the content of the Articles represented something of an attempt to draw the Irish church closer in language and confession to the Reformed churches of the continent and thus to address some of the concerns of the more Puritan clergy on issues of polity, forms, and theology.[28] On the more specific theological plane, they added considerably to the teaching of the Thirty Nine Articles.

Unlike the Thirty Nine Articles, the Irish Articles were explicitly covenantal in the way that they understood God's relationship to his creation and, most significantly, included a reference to the covenant of works. Art. 21 makes it clear that Adam was created with the law engraved on his heart and with the promise of eternal life on condition of his perfect obedience.[29] Arts. 29-30 then deal with Christ as the mediator of the second covenant, or covenant of grace.[30] The Articles also contain a massively expanded section on predestination because they actually include the text of the Lambeth Articles. Thus, while Article 17 of the original Thirty Nine Articles offered a brief statement of single predestination, the Irish Articles offered seven articles (11 to 17) and a clear assertion of double predestination.[31] Finally, the anti-Catholicism of the Thirty Nine Articles was intensified, with Irish Article 80 identifying the Pope with the biblical Man of Sin, in other words, the Antichrist.[32] In sum, the Irish Articles represented "a comprehensive revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles, which brought them up to date, and systematized and defined the prevailing Calvinist concerns of the English and Irish churches."[33]

THE REIGN OF CHARLES I (1625-59)

Charles I inherited both his father's primary political problem—the need to find a unified religious settlement for the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland—and his father's belief in the Divine Right of Kings. Indeed, he held the latter with even greater passion. What he did not inherit was his father's political savvy and capacity for intelligent strategy; and this was in no small measure a factor in the wars in which he was forced to engage in Scotland and then in England against parliament, that cost him his crown and his life.[34]

Within the bounds of the Reformed Orthodox, the years prior to the calling of the Westminster Assembly in 1643 were marked by increasing tension and fractures within the public consensus. Jonathan Moore has called attention to the way in which debates about the nature and extent of Christ's atonement gradually strained the English Reformed consensus which, at the time of Dordt, happily included men such as Davenant, but the1640s was split between particularists and universalists, although continental Amyraldianism appears to have been only a tangential issue at Westminster.[35] Ecclesiology too proved a flashpoint. Theologians agreed on the details of the Reformed Orthodox system of divinity but were ranged against each other on matters pertaining to Anglican ritual, church government, and church-state issues.[36] This latter issue became even more acute once the Assembly was summoned in 1643 with a view to revising Anglicanism in a way that would prove more acceptable to the Reformed parties.

Prior to this time, however, the Netherlands and the American colonies had continued to prove attractive to the more radical of the Puritans who bristled under Stuart religious policy. For example, the Reformed theologian William Ames (1576-1633), a student of William Perkins, who had left for the Netherlands under James I, enjoyed a career there as both an outstanding theology professor at Franeker and then as minister in Rotterdam. Ames's writing exhibits a remarkable breadth, from a summary of theology connected to the Heidelberg Catechism to a system of theology to a standard textbook on casuistry to a critique of ceremonial worship to a major controversial engagement with Robert Bellarmine.[37]

As to America, a good example of a more radical Puritan who headed west but remained influential in his homeland is that of John Cotton (1585-1652). Cotton headed to the colonies in 1633, the year William Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury. While he was famous for his controversial engagement with Roger Williams over church-state issues, he was perhaps most influential back in England through his works which advocated Independency as the biblical form of church polity. Indeed, his writings in this area were central to converting John Owen from Presbyterianism and thus providing English Independency with its most significant intellect and leader.[38]

Antinomianism

Various controversies and events helped to give Reformed theology in Britain a distinctive shape in the seventeenth century. One of the most significant was the issue of antinomianism. While antinomianism, like modern fundamentalism, is difficult to define, its critics saw it as essentially emphasizing the objective work of Christ to such an extent that the moral imperatives of the Christian life were completely undermined. Evidence suggests that various groups that one might designate as antinomian flourished in pre-Civil War England;[39] and a number of theologians emerged in the 1630s and 1640s whose writings were certainly criticized for antinomianism.[40] In America, the infamous case of Anne Hutchinson in 1636 served as an example of the tensions within Reformed communities on the issue of good works, and, while Hutchinson was herself clearly of a radical bent, even a figure of the unimpeachable orthodoxy of John Cotton was initially sympathetic to her viewpoint.[41]

If the social experiment of the Puritan settlers was one context for such struggles, back in England, the general political and social chaos of the 1640s fuelled fear of antinomianism.[42] This is most evident in the work of the theologically eccentric autodidact, Richard Baxter who, from 1649 onwards, was arguing for a form of justification based upon what amounted to a synthesis of imputation and impartation.[43] He even regarded John Owen and Johannes Maccovius as essentially deviant antinomians because of their understanding that Christ's atonement as involving a *solutio eiusdem* (identical satisfaction) rather than a *solutio tantidem* (equivalent satisfaction) for human sin.[44] Owen's response was to defend the application of *solutio eiusdem* to the atonement but to accent the dynamic role which faith played, given that it was instrumental to union with Christ; and only in union with Christ did Christ's atonement and righteousness become immediately effective for the believer.[45] As linguistic tit-for-tat, opponents of the theology of Baxter and his co-belligerents on this point labeled his position on justification "neonomianism," a term no more helpful than antinomianism.[46]

The Theology of the Westminster Assembly

When the King declared war against Parliament in 1642, the scope for reform of the Church of England was dramatically broadened, and Parliament's summoning of the Westminster Assembly in 1643 was the primary formal move in this direction.

As noted above, antinomianism was a worry to many orthodox theologians at the time, a worry

not allayed by the chaos of civil war. Yet, while debates over justification formed part of the theological backdrop to the Westminster Assembly, the Assembly's brief was, of course, much wider than justification and, indeed, became much more radical just a few months in to its existence. Ecclesiologically, it was intended to be representative of various parties within the church: Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and Erastians. The Assembly was originally called for the relatively modest purpose of "the settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England, and for the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the said Church from all false calumnies and aspersions."[47] However, the need to seek the military support of the Scots led Parliament to broaden the Assembly's brief to include a much more thoroughgoing reformation of the government of the church in order to bring it closer into line with the continental reformed churches and especially the Church of Scotland. Thus, the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant by Scots and English Parliament on September 25, 1643, opened the way not only for Scottish military intervention on Parliament's side in the Civil War (the underlying purpose of the agreement) but also for Scottish commissioners to join the Assembly.[48] While they did not have votes, their powerful intellects and personalities ensured that they put their distinctive stamp upon the proceedings.[49]

The Assembly sat between 1643 and 1652 and produced six documents: the Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, the Directory for Public Worship, the Directory for Church Government, and the Psalter. The theology contained in these is on the whole consistent with the continental Reformed tradition, the one notable exception perhaps being the very vigorous sabbatarianism which the Westminster Standards contain, particularly in the Larger Catechism, Questions 115 to 121. This reflects precisely that English (and then Scottish) sabbatarianism which had emerged as a key identity marker between the Puritans and the Reformed Anglican establishment under Elizabeth.

Further, it is also notable that the Catechisms do not follow the long-established catechetical structure of using the Apostles' Creed, the Decalogue, and the Lord's Prayer as providing the basic framework.[50] The exclusion of the Creed as an explicit structuring device has been the subject of some discussion among scholars, but the conclusion of John Bower, that the Creed's basic substance is there in the Catechisms but that the abandonment of its use as a literal framework afforded the Assembly much greater scope for developing "advanced and sophisticated" content seems entirely adequate.[51]

A particular area of note is that of justification. Here, there was significant debate about whether the Confession should contain an explicit statement affirming that Christ's whole obedience, active and passive, was imputed to the believer in justification. This was, of course, a point of contention in the wider theological world between the Reformed and the Arminians. Arminius himself located the start of Christ's humiliation, and thus salvific work, with the trial before Pilate.[52] By the 1640s the distinction between the two, with an emphasis on only the passive obedience as being part of justification, was no Arminian distinctive. Indeed, no less an orthodox figure than William Twisse (1578-1646), first Prolocutor of the Assembly, himself held to the imputation of Christ's passive obedience alone.[53] The work of Johannes Piscator appears to have shaped the thinking of Thomas Gataker (1574-1654), a delegate at the Assembly, and that of his colleague, Richard Vines, who together led a minority group that expressed concern over notions of imputation of whole righteousness;[54] and, given Gataker's brilliance and the need for the Assembly to find a consensus, it was inevitable that there would be significant discussion on this point.[55] Indeed, another delegate to the Assembly, George Walker, had pursued another proponent of imputation of passive obedience alone, one Anthony Wotton, from 1611, and continued his campaign even after

Wotton's death in 1626, finally redirecting his ire at Gataker.[56]

In addition to the influence of the writings of men like Piscator, there are other possible reasons for the concerns of men like Twisse and Gataker with regards to this issue. First, as noted above, antinomianism was considered a serious threat and, in the turmoil of the 1640s, this threat would have been perceived as far more than simply a cause of contention in the classroom. With England apparently on the verge of anarchy, antinomianism was regarded as profoundly dangerous, and there is evidence to suggest this was a significant factor in the minds of the delegates as they debated the issue.[57] Van Dixhoorn has put the matter nicely: by 1643, the enemy was not found in Madrid but in London.[58] Second, the impact of the argument of Anselm in *Cur Deus Homo*, whereby Christ's active obedience effectively equips him to be the mediator, should not be discounted, as it can be found in the works of men like Gataker.[59]

It is clear that a majority of the Assembly were in favour of including Christ's whole obedience in its statement on justification. The original proposed revision of Article 11 of the Thirty Nine Articles spoke of "his whole obedience and satisfaction being by God imputed to us";[60] but in the end the adjective "whole" was omitted from the key passages in Chapter 11.[61] The issue is highly instructive for understanding British Reformed Orthodoxy, because it not only shows how British reformed theologians were self-consciously operating against the background of the broader Europen theological scene, but also how the particularities of the national context gave debates and even confessional theology a specific and distinctive shape.

THE COMMONWEALTH AND PROTECTORATE (1649-1660)

The period of the Commonwealth and Protectorate marked the high point of influence of John Owen, the leading Independent Puritan theologian and one of the most significant Reformed Orthodox thinkers of the seventeenth century. Owen was not alone, however, in the elaboration of Reformed theology in England at this time. Other noteworthy theologians included Edward Leigh (1602-71), a remarkable layman who yet managed to write works on ancient history, devotional aids, studies of biblical linguistics, and a major systematic treatment of the Reformed faith, which went through several revisions and editions.[62] James Ussher's theological system, originally published in the 1640s, enjoyed numerous reprints during this time. It is perhaps misleading to regard him as the author of this work, since it was structured by catechetical questions, the answers to which he drew from the works of others. Thus, he was really the compiler and organizer of what is essentially a topical concatenation of the words of others writers.[63] Also of note is the major philosophical study of God, produced by Thomas Barlow (1607-91), John Owen's Oxford tutor, lifelong friend, and Episcopalian.[64]

John Owen

John Owen's voluminous writings span the 1640s to the 1680s; yet particularly significant contributions were made during the Commonwealth and Protectorate, when he served variously as Cromwell's chaplain, dean of Christ Church, and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University. Most noteworthy during the 1650s were his criticism of Brian Walton's London Polyglot, particularly for its advocacy of a late date for the Masoretic vowel points; and his theological refutation of Socinianism.

While the actual extent of Socinian impact in England in the 1650s is unclear, it is obvious that Parliament considered the matter to be most serious.[65] In particular, a series of works by the English Socinian writer, John Biddle (1615-62), served to stir up concern on this matter.[66] This led the Council of State to commission John Owen to produce a major refutation of Biddle's work and also of the Racovian Catechism, which he did in *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (London, 1655), address-

ing such issues as trinitarianism and atonement, but also questions about divine embodiment and spatial presence drawing deeply on the medieval Thomist tradition.[67] In addressing Socinianism, Owen also changed his own position on divine justice, arguing that, if God was to forgive sin, then incarnation and atonement were necessary as a result of his being, not simply by an act of his will. This distanced him from other Reformed theologians, such as John Calvin, William Twisse, and Samuel Rutherford, and from his own arguments in his treatise, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (London, 1648).[68]

Perhaps Owen's most original contribution to Reformed Orthodoxy, in addition to his practical work on the psychology of indwelling sin in the believer,[69] was his development of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation, a point which he built upon the patristic insights in the anhypostatic nature of Christ's humanity considered in itself. This enabled Owen to develop a Trinitarian understanding of the communication of properties which both allowed him to understand the Incarnation in Trinitarian terms and to offer an account of Christ's life which preserved the dynamic movement of the Jesus depicted in the Gospels.[70]

CONCLUSION

The Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 effectively marked the end of the Puritan project, both politically and theologically. A series of Parliamentary Acts, known collectively as the Clarendon Code, served to enforce rigid conformity to the Book of Common Prayer and to the Anglican hierarchy. Those who refused to conform—nearly 2,000 ministers—left the church in the so-called "Great ejection" on August 31, 1662, the day the Act of Uniformity came into force and also the anniversary of the St Bartholomew's Day massacre.[71]

The result was that the internal struggle for a more Reformed Anglicanism was brought to a dramatic end; and, perhaps even more significantly, those who would not conform wholeheartedly to the Book of Common Prayer were also excluded from the educational, civic, and political establishment; thus, English non-conformists were shunted to the margins of cultural and intellectual life. While the situation in Scotland was somewhat better for the Reformed—the Church of Scotland remaining Presbyterian in polity and Reformed in confession—the era of the great English Puritan intellects was drawing to a close.

Puritan theology remains of interest to the church today, however, for several reasons. First, it represents a serious attempt to trace out the implications of Reformed theology for pastoral practice and Christian experience. Secondly, it was a significant factor in the formulation of the creeds and confessions of the Protestant Reformed churches, and thus is a vital part of understanding the heritage of the same. Third, in their concern both for the great theological trajectories of catholic doctrine and for the souls placed under their care in their churches, the Puritans offer instructive examples of how doctrine and life are to be connected together in the lives of believers and churches.

ENDNOTES

[1]See, for example, Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord: Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and the Grand Debate* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985). While the Assembly attempted nothing less than the recasting of Anglicanism in a Reformed Orthodox form, Paul's work, until recently the only major scholarly monograph on the subject, focused largely on the discussions of the relationship of church and state.

[2]A good example of this is provided by the overall scope and emphases in the essays in John Coffey and Paul Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008). The field is vast, but key texts include: Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967); Susan Harman Moore, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home*

(New Haven: Yale University, 2007); Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982); Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: the Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995); Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven: Yale University, 2002).

[3]See Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

[4]Doctrinally focused historical studies include Mark Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Macon: Mercer University, 2000); Jeffrey K. Jue, *Heaven upon Earth: Joseph Mede and the Legacy of Millenarianism* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006); Kelly K. Kapic, *Communion with God: the Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Jonathan D. Moore *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Sebastian Rehnman, *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998); idem, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). Studies draw positively on this newer history of Reformed theology while addressing more traditional questions of politics, literature, and society include John Coffey, *Politics, Religion, and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997); Crawford Gribben, *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (New York: Oxford University, 2007).

[5]See Carl R. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy: Salvation and English Reformers, 1525-1556* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 215-18.

[6]On England during the reign of Edward, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London: Penguin, 2001).

[7]On these incidents, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven: Yale, 1996), 471-85, 525-33.

[8]See Trueman, *Luther's Legacy*, 243-76.

[9]On the events in Frankfurt, see Ridley, *John Knox*, 189-214.

[10]The definitive study remains Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*.

[11]"It is a popular misconception that as soon as it appeared…, [the Geneva] Bible … became the most widely read English Bible, and that it did so largely on account of its marginal notes, which are supposed to reflect an extreme Calvinist orthodoxy. In reality, the Geneva translation got off to a slow start." Peter White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 91.

[12]Cornelis W. Schoneveld, *Intertraffic of the Mind: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Anglo-Dutch Translation with a Checklist of Books Translated from English into Dutch, 1600-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 124.

[13]*Armilla aurea, id est, Theologiae descriptio mirandam seriem causarum & salutis & damnationis iuxta verbum desproponens: eius synopsin continet annexa ad finem tabula accessit practica Th. Bezae pro consolandis afflictis conscientijs* (London, 1591). For a discussion of the chart, see Richard A. Muller, "Perkins" *A Golden Chaine*: Predestinarian System or Schematized Ordo Salutis?' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10 (1979): 51-61.

[14]*A case of conscience the greatest that euer was; how a man may know whether he be the child of God or no* (London, 1592).

[15]*A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie and cases of conscience* (London, 1673).

[16]*A book of Christian exercise, appertaining to resolution, that is, shewing how that we should resolue our selues to become Christians indeede. By Robert Parson; Perused, and accompanied nowe with a treatise tending to pacification, by Edmund Bunny* (Oxford, 1585).

[17]White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic*, 99.

[18]In the 1580s, Oxford underwent its own, less public, controversy over predestination, caused by the work of Anthony Corro, a continental immigrant: see Nicholas Tyacke, *Anticalvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 58.

[19]The Latin text of the Articles can be found in E. F. K. Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1903), 525-26.

[20]V. C. Miller, *The Lambeth Articles*, Latimer Studies 44-45 (Oxford: Latimer House, 1994), 54.

[21]The sermon is reprinted in *The Works of James Arminius* (ed. J. Nichols; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 1:92-100.

[22]Quoted in Miller, *The Lambeth Articles*, 55,

[23]Influential in this regard was Nicholas Bownd, *The doctrine of the sabbath plainely layde forth, and soundly proued by testimonies both of holy scripture, and also of olde and new ecclesiasticall writers* (London, 1595).

[24]*The Kings Maiesties declaration to his subiects, concerning lawfull sports to be vsed* (London, 1618).

[25]See Kenneth Parker, *The English Sabbath: A Study of Doctrine and Discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988).

[26]Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, History,and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85-86. The text of the Articles can found in Müller, 526-39.

[27]Ford, 86. Peter Heylyn, a historian hostile to the Presbyterian church, and further efforts at reform was in no doubt that the Irish Articles represented little more than a plot to sever the Irish church from its English mother, and that in a radically Calvinist direction: Peter Heylyn, *Aerius redivivus, or, the history of the Presbyterians* (Oxford, 1670), 394.

[28]Ford, *James Ussher,* 91.

[29]Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche*, 528.

[30]Ibid., 529-30.

[31]Ibid., 527-28.

[32]Ibid., 536.

[33]Ford, *James Ussher,* 100.

[34]For a good narrative history of Charles' reign and its problems, through the Commonwealth and Protestcorate, to the Restoration, see Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625-60* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004).

[35]See Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism.*

[36]For example, James Ussher was an Episcopalian, Samuel Rutherford a Presbyterian, Thomas Goodwin an Independent, and John Lightfoot an Erastian.

[37]*The Substance of Christian Religion: Or, A Plain and Easie Draught of the Christian Catechisme, in LII* (London, 1659); *The marrow of sacred divinity drawne out of the holy Scriptures and the interpreters thereof, and brought into method* (London, 1643); *Conscience with the power and cases thereof Divided into V. bookes* (Leiden and London, 1639); *A Fresh Suit Against Human Ceremonies in God's Worship* (n.p., 1633); *Bellarminus enervatus* (London, 1629). For Ames' biography, see *The learned doctor William Ames: Dutch backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1972).

[38]The work in question was *The keyes of the kingdom of heaven, and power thereof, according to the Word of God* (London, 1644).

[39]See Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004); David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2004).

[40]John Eaton, *The Honey-Combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone* (London, 1642); John Saltmarsh, *The fountaine of free grace opened by questions and answers* (London, 1645); Tobias Crisp, *Christ alone exalted in fourteene sermons* (London, 1643). Crisp's sermons were reprinted in 1690, causing the redoubtable and elderly Richard Baxter to come out of retirement for one more polemical skirmish over the issues of the 1640s and 50s.

[41]See Michael Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2002).

[42]The full title of Thomas Edwards' 1646 work indicates the concerns of the times with growing sectarianism, of which antinomianism was seen to be a part: *Gangraena, or, A catalogue and discovery of many of the errours, heresies, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries of this time, vented and acted in England in these four last years as also a particular narration of divers stories, remarkable passages, letters, an extract of many letters, all concerning the present sects: together*

with some observations upon and corollaries from all the fore-named premises (London, 1646).

[43]Baxter's principal works on justification are: *Aphorismes of justification with their explication annexed* (London, 1649); *Of justification four disputations clearing and amicably defending the truth against the unnecessary oppositions of divers learned and reverend brethren* (London, 1658); *Full and easy satisfaction which is the true and safe religion* (London, 1674); *How far holinesse is the design of Christianity where the nature of holiness and morality is opened, and the doctrine of justification, imputation of sin and righteousness, &c. partly cleared, and vindicated from abuse* (London, 1671). For scholarly discussion, see Hans Boersma, *A Hot Peppercorn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer: Boekncentrum, 1993); Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); James I. Packer, *The Redemption & Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2003).

[44]On this distinction, see Trueman, *The Claims of Truth*, 211-17.

[45]Trueman, *John Owen*, 117-18.

[46]E.g., Isaac Chauncy, *Neonomianism unmask'd, or, The ancient gospel pleaded against the other, called a new law or gospel in a theological debate, occasioned by a book lately wrote by Mr. Dan. Williams, entituled, Gospel-truth stated and vindicated* (London, 1693). Williams edited and republished some of Baxter works after the latter's death; the Chauncy work was part of the polemical exchange generated by the republication of Tobias Crisp's works in 1690.

[47]Quoted in Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 30.

[48]Though commissioners, the Scots were not members of the Assembly nor even *commissioners* as such; rather they were to represent Scottish interests to Parliament and to the Assembly: see Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 41.

[49]The Westminster Assembly Project offers a major bibliography of resources relating to the Assembly. Cited 18 May 2010. Online: http://www.westminsterassembly.org/bibliography-project. All students of the Assembly should consult Chad B. Van Dixhoorn, "Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly 1643-1652" (7 vols.; Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University); also Robert Letham, *Westminister Assembly*. Van Dixhoorn's work is a transcription, with editorial commentary, on the Minutes of the Assembly and thus offers insights not simply into the theology of the Assembly but also into its working practices.

[50]T. F. Torrance sees the exclusion of the Creed as reflecting the Assembly's desire to adopt a federal theological scheme. Such exclusion would hardly have been necessary: Caspar Olevianus (1536-87) produced a commentary on the Creed that was explicitly covenantal in its theology, *Expositio symbolici apostolici* (Frankfurt, 1580). Robert Letham regards the exclusion as "studied indifference and deliberate exclusion" and concludes that this shows how many of the Assembly's members were of a separatist mentality which represented a growing loss of historical consciousness: *Westminster Assembly*, 56-57. This is possible, but a rather sweeping conclusion based on equivocal evidence which could be the result of alternative, less radical agendas at play such as that suggested by Bower.

[51]John Bower, *The Larger Catechism: A Critical Text and Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 22. He cites the work of Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c. 1530-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 284, to the effect that nearly half of the catechisms produced by Puritans in the seventeenth century refrained from using the Apostles' Creed in the traditional manner. Indeed, Bower notes that two of the catechisms which the Assembly used as early models did not cite the Apostles' Creed other than in their titles: Herbert Palmer, *An Endeavour of the Making the Principles of Christian Religion, Namely the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments, Plaine and Easie* (London, 1641); Henry Vosey, *The Scope of the Scripture. Containing a Briefe Exposition of the Apostles Creed, the Tenne Commandements, the Lords Prayer, and the Sacraments, by Short Ques-*

tions and Answers (London, 1633).

[52]"Disputatio Privata XXXVIII: De statibus Christi, tum humilitatis, tum exaltationis," *Opera Theologica* (Leiden, 1629), 386-88. Interestingly enough, given what was noted above about the Apostles' Creed, Arminius specifically cites the Creed at the start of the disputation and uses its statement of Christ's work (which omits all reference to anything between his birth and his trial before Pilate) as providing an outline for discussing Christ's salvific work.

[53]Alexander F. Mitchell and John Struthers, eds., *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874), lxvi.

[54]Vines position was closer to Piscator's than was Gataker's, in that he held to justification as remission, not imputation: Van Dixhoorn, 3.25; Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 253-54.

[55]Prior to the Assembly, a work was published which presented the doctrine of justification as a three-way discussion between Piscator, Lucius of Basle, and Gataker: *D. Ioannis Piscatoris Herbonensis et M. Ludovici Lucci Basiliensis, Scripta quaedam adversaria; De Causa meritoria nostril coram Deo Justificationis: una cum Thomae Gatakeri Londinatis Animadversionibus in utraque* (London, 1641).

[56]See Walker's account of his campaign, *A True Relation of the chiefe passages betweene Mr Anthony Wotton and Mr George Walker* (London, 1642). In the same year, Gataker found it necessary to defend himself against charges of Socinian from the same gentleman: *An Answer to Mr George Walkers Vindication or rather Fresh Accusation* (London, 1642). It should be noted that there is a significant difference between Piscator and Gataker, in that the former regarded justification as purely the remission of sins, while the latter saw it as remission of sins and imputation of Christ's passive obedience.

[57]Thomas Gataker makes the connection explicit in his critique of John Saltmarsh: *Antinomianism Discovered and Confuted: and Free Grace as it is held forth in God's Word* (London, 1652); also Daniel Featley, while supporting the imputation of the whole obedience of Christ, acknowledges that this position is one he shares with the antinomians, *The Dippers Dipt*, 5th ed. (London, 1647), 199-200.

[58]Van Dixhoorn, 1.28, 276.

[59]*Scripta quaedam adversaria*, 1.69, 3.10-11.

[60]Quoted in Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 251-52

[61]A full account of the debate is found in Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 252-64, which is itself a helpful synthesis of the relevant section of Van Dixhoorn.

[62]*A systeme or body of divinity consisting of ten books* (London, 1654).

[63]*A body of divinitie, or, The summe and substance of Christian religion catechistically propounded, and explained, by way of question and answer: methodically and familiarly handled* (London, 1645).

[64]*Exercitationes aliquot metaphysicae, de Deo: quod sit objectum metaphysicae, quod sit naturaliter cognoscibilis, quousque, & quibus mediis* (Oxford, 1658). Barlow also wrote against that most British of delicacies, the black pudding: *The triall of a black-pudding. Or, The unlawfulness of eating blood proved by Scriptures, before the law, under the law, and after the law. By a well wisher to ancient truth* (London, 1652).

[65]In the 1640s, English theologian, Francis Cheynell, had considered the threat to be sufficient to justify the production of a major history of the movement: *The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socinianisme* (London, 1643).

[66]*The apostolical and true opinion concerning the Holy Trinity, revived and asserted* (London, 1653); *The testimonies of Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Novatianus, Theophilus, Origen, (who lived in the two first centuries after Christ was born, or thereabouts;) as also, of Arnobius, Lactantius, Eusebius, Hilary, and Brightman; concerning that one God, and the persons of the Holy Trinity. Together with observations on the same* (London, 1653); *A brief scripture-catechism for* children. *Wherein, notwithstanding the brevity thereof, all things necessary unto life and godliness are contained* (London, 1654); *A twofold catechism: the one simply called A Scripture-catechism; the other, A brief Scripture-catechism for children* (London, 1654)

[67]See Trueman, *John Owen*, 39-42.

[68]Carl R. Trueman, "John Owen's *Dissertation on Divine Justice*: An Exercise in Christocentric Scholasticism,"

Calvin Theological Journal 33 (1998): 87-103.

[69]*The nature, power, deceit, and prevalency of the remainders of indwelling-sin in believers together with the wayes of its working, and means of prevention: opened, envinced and applyed, with a resolution of sundry cases of conscience thereunto appertaining* (London, 1668).

[70]See Trueman, *John Owen*, 92-98.

[71]The choice of date was deliberate and designed to be threatening to the reformed, just as imposing Sharia law on the U.S.A. on September 11 might have on Americans today.

Reading the Puritans

Joel R. Beeke

A medieval Talmudic scholar, R. Isaiah Di Trani (c. 1200–1260), once asked, "Who can see farther, a giant or a dwarf?"

The answer was, "Surely the giant, because his eyes are higher than those of the dwarf."

"But if the giant carries the dwarf on his shoulders, who can see farther?" Di Trani persisted.

"Surely the dwarf, whose eyes are now above the eyes of the giant," was the answer.

Di Trani then said, "We too are dwarfs riding on the shoulders of giants.... [I]t is by virtue of the power of their wisdom that we have learned all that we say, and not because we are greater than they were."[1]

The point is: a dwarf must realize his place among giants. This is true of all human achievement. When we survey church history, we discover giants of the faith, such as Aurelius Augustine (354–430), Martin Luther (1483–1546), John Calvin (1509–1564), John Owen (1616–1683), and Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). Amid those giants the Puritans also rise as giants of exegetical ability, intellectual achievement, and profound piety.

Upon this mountain our Reformed "city" is built. We are where we are because of our history, though we are dwarves on the shoulders of giants. Who would George Whitefield (1714–1770), Charles Hodge (1797–1878), Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937), or D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) be if not for their predecessors? Despite this, Puritan studies were sorely neglected until the resurgence of Puritan literature in the late 1950s. Even today, in many evangelical circles, Puritan theology is still marginalized. While the Puritans built palaces, we are comfortable building shacks; where they planted fields, we plant but a few flowers; while they turned over every stone in theological reflection, we are content with pebbles; where they aimed for comprehensive depth, we aim for catchy sound bites.

The Latin phrase *tolle lege,* meaning "pick up and read," offers a remedy for this apathy toward spiritual truth. Our ancestors have left us a rich theological and cultural heritage. We can say of the Puritans what Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) said of his evening routine of reading the ancients, "I enter the ancient courts of rulers who have long since died. There I am warmly welcomed, and I

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feed on the only food I find nourishing."[2]

Returning to Puritan writings will also reward a diligent reader. Whitefield said, "Though dead, by their writings they yet speak: a peculiar unction attends them to this very hour."[3] Whitefield predicted that Puritan writings would be read until the end of time due to their scriptural truth. Spurgeon agreed, saying, "In these [writings] they do live forever. Modern interpreters have not superseded them, nor will they altogether be superseded to the end of time."[4] Today we are witnessing a revival of sorts in reading the Puritans. Initiated largely by the Banner of Truth Trust, which has been systematically and carefully publishing Puritan literature since the late 1950s,[5] Puritan reprints in the last fifty years now include 150 Puritan authors and seven hundred Puritan titles printed by more than seventy-five publishers.[6] Reformation Heritage Books (RHB) alone—of which the Puritan line of Soli Deo Gloria is an imprint—carries approximately 150 Puritan titles and also sells at discount prices close to five hundred Puritan titles that are currently in print.

We are grateful for this resurgence of interest in Puritan writings. However, this resurgence faces some challenges and poses some questions which I will address in this article. I wish to address five points. First, I will point out several ways of how to benefit by reading the Puritans. Second, I will consider some ideas on how to begin reading the Puritans, and then, third, look at a reading plan for the writings of an individual Puritan, Thomas Goodwin. Fourth, I will look at some of my favorite Puritans, and finally, I will consider some ideas for printing more Puritan books in the future.

HOW TO PROFIT FROM READING THE PURITANS

Here are nine ways you can grow spiritually by reading Puritan literature today: (1) *Puritan writings help shape life by Scripture.* The Puritans loved, lived, and breathed Holy Scripture. They also relished the power of the Spirit that accompanied the Word. Rarely can you open a Puritan book and not find its pages filled with Scripture references; their books are all Word-centered. More than 90 percent of their writings are repackaged sermons rich with scriptural exposition. The Puritan writers truly believed in the sufficiency of Scripture for life and godliness.

If you read the Puritans regularly, their Bible-centeredness will become contagious. These writings will teach you to yield wholehearted allegiance to the Bible's message. Like the Puritans, you will become a believer of the Living Book, echoing the truth of John Flavel (1628–1691), who said, "The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying."[7]

(2) *Puritan writings show how to integrate biblical doctrine into daily life.* Cornelis Pronk wrote, "The Puritan's concern … was primarily ethical or moral rather than abstractly doctrinal."[8] The Puritan writings express this emphasis in three ways: First, they *address your mind.* In keeping with the Reformed tradition, the Puritans refused to set mind and heart against each other, but viewed the mind as the palace of faith. William Greenhill (1591–1671) stated, "Ignorance is the mother of all errors."[9] The Puritans understood that a mindless Christianity fosters a spineless Christianity. An anti-intellectual gospel quickly becomes an empty, formless gospel that never gets beyond catering to felt needs. Puritan literature is a great help for understanding the vital connection between what we believe and how that affects the way we live.

Second, Puritan writings *confront your conscience*. Today many preachers are masterful at avoiding convicting people of sin, whereas the Puritans were masters at convicting us about the heinous nature of our sin against an infinite God. This is amply displayed in Ralph Venning's (c. 1622–1674) *The Sinfulness of Sin*. For example, Venning wrote, "Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, the contempt of his love."[10]

The Puritans excelled at exposing specific sins, then asked questions to press home conviction of

those sins. As one Puritan wrote, "We must go with the stick of divine truth and beat every bush behind which a sinner hides, until like Adam who hid, he stands before God in his nakedness."

Devotional reading should be confrontational as well as comforting. We grow little if our consciences are not pricked daily and directed to Christ. Since we are prone to run for the bushes when we feel threatened, we need daily help to come before the living God, "naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13). In this, the Puritans excelled. Owen wrote, "Christ by his death destroying the works of the devil, procuring the Spirit for us, hath so killed sin, as to its reign in believers, that it shall not obtain its end and dominion.... Look on him under the weight of your sins, praying, bleeding, dying; bring him in that condition into thy heart of faith."[11]

Third, Puritan writers *engage your heart*. They feed the mind with solid biblical substance *and* they move the heart with affectionate warmth. They wrote out of love for God's Word, love for the glory of God, and love for the soul of readers. They did this because their hearts were touched by God and they, in turn, longed for others to feel and experience salvation. As John Bunyan (1628–1688) exclaimed, "O that they who have heard me speak this day did but see as I do what sin, death, hell, and the curse of God is; and also what the grace, and love, and mercy of God is, through Jesus Christ."[12]

(3) *Puritan writings show how to exalt Christ and see His beauty.* The Puritan Thomas Adams (1583–1652) wrote, "Christ is the sum of the whole Bible, prophesied, typified, prefigured, exhibited, demonstrated, to be found in every leaf, almost in every line, the Scriptures being but as it were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus."[13]

The Puritans loved Christ and relished His beauty. The best example of this is probably Samuel Rutherford's (1600–1661) *Letters,* which sing the sweetest canticles of the Savior. To an elder, Rutherford wrote, "Christ, Christ, nothing but Christ, can cool our love's burning languor. O thirsty love! Wilt thou set Christ, the well of life, to thy head, and drink thy fill? Drink, and spare not; drink love, and be drunken with Christ!"[14] To another friend, he wrote, "I have a lover Christ, and yet I want love for Him! I have a lovely and desirable Lord, who is love-worthy, and who beggeth my love and heart, and I have nothing to give Him! Dear brother, come further in on Christ, and see a new wonder, and heaven and earth's wonder of love, sweetness, majesty, and excellency in Him."[15] If you would know Christ better and love Him more fully, immerse yourself in Puritan literature.

(4) *Puritan writings highlight the Trinitarian character.* The Puritans were driven by a deep sense of the infinite glory of a Triune God. Edmund Calamy (1600–1666) noted this doctrine should "be allowed to be of as great importance in itself and its consequences, as any of our most distinguishing Christian principles."[16] When the Puritans said in the Shorter Catechism that man's chief end was to glorify God, they meant the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They took Calvin's glorious understanding of the unity of the Trinity in the Godhead, and showed how that worked out in electing, redeeming, and sanctifying love and grace in the lives of believers. Owen wrote an entire book on the Christian believer's distinct communion with each Person in the Godhead—with God as Father, Jesus as Savior, and the Holy Spirit as Comforter. Samuel Rutherford echoed the conviction of many Puritans when he said that he did not know which divine person he loved the most, but he knew that he needed each of them and loved them all. The Puritans teach us how to remain God-centered while being vitally concerned about Christian experience so that we don't fall into the trap of glorifying experience for its own sake.

(5) *Puritan writings show how to handle trials.* Puritanism grew out of a great struggle between the truth of God's Word and its enemies. Reformed Christianity was under attack in Eng-

land at the time of the Puritans, much like today. The Puritans were good soldiers in the conflict; they endured great hardships and suffered much. Their lives and writings arm us for battle and encourage us in suffering. The Puritans teach us how affliction is necessary to humble us (Deut 8:2), to teach us what sin is (Zeph 1:12), and to bring us back to God (Hos 5:15).

Much of the comfort the Puritans offer grows out of the very nature of God. Henry Scougal (1650–1678) said of afflicted believers that it comforts them "to remember that an unerring providence doth overrule all their seeming disorders, and makes them all serve to great and glorious designs."[17] And Thomas Watson (c. 1620–1686) declared, "Afflictions work for good, as they conform us to Christ. God's rod is a pencil to draw Christ's image more lively upon us."[18]

(6) *Puritan writings describe true spirituality.* The Puritans stressed the spirituality of the law, the spiritual warfare against indwelling sin, the childlike fear of God, the wonder of grace, the art of meditation, the dreadfulness of hell, and the glories of heaven. If you want to live deeply as a Christian, read Oliver Heywood's *Heart Treasure.* Read the Puritans devotionally, then pray to be like them. Ask questions such as: Am I, like the Puritans, thirsting to glorify the Triune God? Am I motivated by biblical truth and biblical fire? Do I share their view of the vital necessity of conversion and of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ? Do I follow the Puritans as they followed Christ? Does my life savor of true spirituality?

(7) *Puritan writings show how to live by holistic faith.* The Puritans applied every subject they discussed to practical "uses," which propel a believer into passionate, effective action for Christ's kingdom. In their daily lives they integrated Christian truth with covenant vision; they knew no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. Their writings can help you live in a way that centers on God. They will help you appreciate God's gifts and declare everything "holiness to the Lord."

The Puritans excelled as covenant theologians. They lived that theology, covenanting themselves, their families, their churches, and their nations to God. Yet they did not fall into the error of "hyper-covenantalism," in which the covenant of grace became a substitute for personal conversion. They promoted a comprehensive worldview that brought the whole gospel to bear on all of life, striving to bring every action in conformity with Christ, so that believers would mature and grow in faith. The Puritans wrote on practical subjects, such as how to pray, how to develop genuine piety, how to conduct family worship, and how to raise children for Christ. In short, as J. I. Packer noted, they taught how to develop a "rational, resolute, passionate piety [that is] conscientious without becoming obsessive, law-oriented without lapsing into legalism, and expressive of Christian liberty without any shameful lurches into license."[19]

(8) *Puritan writings teach the primacy of preaching.* William Perkins (1558–1602) explained why preaching is so critical: "Through preaching those who hear are called into the state of grace, and preserved in it."[20] To the Puritans, preaching was the high point of public worship. "It is no small matter to stand up in the face of a congregation, and deliver a message of salvation or damnation, as from the living God, in the name of our Redeemer," wrote Richard Baxter (1615–1691).[21]

The Puritans taught that preaching must be expository and didactic, evangelistic and convicting, experiential and applicatory, powerful and plain in its presentation, ever respecting the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. For the Puritans, what transpired on Sabbath mornings and evenings was not merely a pep talk but was an encounter with God by the Spirit through the Word.

(9) *Puritan writings show how to live in two worlds.* The Puritans said we should have heaven in our eye throughout our earthly pilgrimage. They took seriously the New Testament passages that say we must keep the hope of glory before our minds to guide and shape our lives here on earth. They viewed this life as "the gymnasium and dressing room where we are prepared for heaven,"

teaching us that preparation for death is the first step in learning to truly live.[22]

These nine points are reason enough to demonstrate the benefit of reading the Puritans. We live in dark days where it seems the visible church in many areas around the globe, and particularly in the West, is floundering. Waning interest in doctrinal fidelity and a disinterest in holiness prevails in many Christians. The church's ministry has been marginalized or ignored. The Puritans were in many ways ahead of their times. Their books address the problems of our day with a scriptural clarity and zeal that the church desperately needs.

WHERE TO BEGIN READING THE PURITANS

The sheer amount of Puritan literature being reprinted today and offered online can be intimidating. Furthermore, the number of books written about the Puritans is nearly as vast as the collection of Puritan titles. The Puritan Research Center at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary alone contains three thousand books of primary and secondary sources, plus thousands of articles about the Puritans.[23]

The Puritans were people of their time, and even while much of what they wrote is timeless, we must understand them within their context. They battled the spirit of their age and waged doctrinal debates pertinent to their day and which, at times, seem quite removed from issues of today. Secondary sources help us understand their historical milieu. The goal of this section is to offer bibliographic information that can help you read the Puritans.

The best overall introduction to the worldview of the Puritans is Leland Ryken's *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were*.[24] Other somewhat shorter yet helpful introductions include Peter Lewis's *The Genius of Puritanism* and Erroll Hulse's *Who Are the Puritans? And What Do They Teach?*[25] For basic biographies of the one hundred fifty Puritans that have been reprinted in the last fifty years, together with brief reviews of seven hundred reprinted Puritan titles, see *Meet the Puritans, with a Guide to Modern Reprints* by Randall J. Pederson and myself.[26] We suggest the best way to use *Meet the Puritans* is to read one biography and reviews of that Puritan writer per day, thus using the book as a kind of daily biographical devotional. For short biographies of more obscure Puritans who have not been reprinted in the last fifty years, see Benjamin Brook (1776–1848), *The Lives of the Puritans*.[27] For brief biographies of most of the Puritans at the Westminster Assembly, see William S. Barker's *Puritan Profiles*.[28] For individual studies of various Puritan divines and aspects of their theology, begin with J. I. Packer's *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life,* and my *Puritan Reformed Spirituality.*[29]

The Puritans can be difficult to read. Their wording, grammatical structure, and detail can be hard for the contemporary mind to grasp. It is best to read short books from some popular Puritan writers before attempting to read Puritans of more theological profundity, such as Owen and Thomas Goodwin (1600–1679). I recommend beginning with Puritan divines like Thomas Watson (c. 1620–1686), John Flavel (1628–1691), and George Swinnock (c. 1627–1673). Watson wrote succinctly, clearly, and simply. His *Art of Divine Contentment, Heaven Taken by Storm,* and *The Doctrine of Repentance* are good places to begin.[30]

Flavel, who was pastor at the seaport of Dartmouth, became known as a seaman's preacher. He is one of the simplest Puritans to read. His *Mystery of Providence* is filled with pastoral and comforting counsel.[31] Swinnock showed a special sensitivity to the Scriptures and could explain doctrines with great wisdom and clarity. You might try his *The Fading of the Flesh and The Flourishing of Faith,* recently edited by Stephen Yuille and printed in a contemporary style.[32] Both Flavel and Swinnock have had their entire works published in multivolume sets.[33]

The books of Richard Sibbes and Thomas Brooks (1608–1680) are also a good place to start, especially Sibbes's *The Bruised Reed* and Brooks's

Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices.[34] You may also benefit from that master of allegory, John Bunyan, though some of his treatises reflect an unexpected intellectual depth from the tinker of Bedford.[35] Then, too, you could move your way through the Banner of Truth's line of Puritan Paperbacks (which is how I began reading the Puritans at age fourteen) or the more recent Pocket Puritans series. Some Puritan titles written by Owen have been abridged by R. J. K. Law and made easier to read. These are good places to start reading the experiential writings of the Puritans.

How to proceed next depends on your particular interest. After becoming acquainted with various styles of Puritan literature, you have a broad spectrum of possibilities to consider. What joys you might have wrestling with Owen's weighty treatments of the glory of Christ, his soul-searching treatise on sin, and his exegetical masterpiece on Hebrews. Or how thrilling it would be to ascend the heights of the intellectual and spiritual atmosphere with Jonathan Edwards, or to plumb the depths of divine attributes with Stephen Charnock (1628–1680). You may probe the redemptive glories of the covenant with John Ball (1585–1640) and Samuel Petto (c. 1624–1711) or be allured by the redemptive doctrines of justification and sanctification with Walter Marshall (1628–1680), Peter van Mastricht (1630–1706), or Robert Traill (1642–1716). You could entrust yourself to a competent guide like Edward Fisher (d. 1655) to bring you safely through the law/gospel distinction or be impressed with the profound but simple writings of Hugh Binning (1627–1653). Prepare to be challenged by the soul-penetrating works of Thomas Shepard (1605–1649) and Matthew Mead (1629–1699) or be instructed by the plain reason of Jeremiah Burroughs (c. 1600–1646), Richard Baxter (1615–1691), and George Hammond (c. 1620–1705).

Whatever topic you select, you may be sure that the Puritans have addressed it with scriptural precision, vivid illumination, practical benefit, experiential warmth, and an eye to the glory of God. Many Puritan writings, however, are not for the faint of heart. But the reader who diligently probes Puritan writings with the willingness to gaze under every rock they overturn and prayerfully consider what they say, will be drawn ever more deeply into the revealed mysteries of God. When you follow the writings of these faithful men, you will find that it will be for the betterment of your soul.

HOW TO READ AN INDIVIDUAL PURITAN

There are no rules for reading individual Puritans, but here are some suggestions. Generally speaking, Puritans are best read slowly and meditatively. Don't rush through their books. Look up the texts they cite to prove their points. Intersperse your reading with prayer.

Here are some guidelines for reading Thomas Goodwin, who was, for twenty years, my favorite Puritan writer. The first collection of Goodwin's works was published in five folio volumes in London from 1681 to 1704, under the editorship of Thankful Owen, Thomas Baron, and Thomas Goodwin Jr. An abridged version of those works was later printed in four volumes (London, 1847–50). James Nichol printed a more reliable collection of Goodwin's works in twelve volumes (Edinburgh, 1861–66) in the Nichol's Series of Standard Divines. It is far superior to the original five folio volumes and was reprinted in 2006 by Reformation Heritage Books.

Goodwin's exegesis is massive; he leaves no stone unturned. His first editors (1681) said of his work: "He had a genius to dive into the bottom of points, to 'study them down,' as he used to express it, not contenting himself with superficial knowledge, without wading into the depths of things."[36] Calamy said: "It is evident from his writings [that] he studied not words, but things. His style is plain and familiar; but very diffuse, homely and tedious."[37] One does need patience to read Goodwin; however, along with depth and prolixity, he offers a wonderful sense of warmth

and experience. A reader's patience will be amply rewarded.

Here is a plan for reading Goodwin's works: (1) Begin by reading some of the shorter, more practical writings of Goodwin, such as *Patience and Its Perfect Work,* which includes four sermons on Jas 1:1–5. This book was written after much of Goodwin's personal library was destroyed by fire (*Works,* 2:429–67). It contains much practical instruction on the spirit of submission.

(2) Read *Certain Select Cases Resolved,* which offers three experiential treatises that reveal Goodwin's pastoral heart for afflicted Christians. Each deals with specific struggles in the believer's soul: (a) "A Child of Light Walking in Darkness" encourages the spiritually depressed based on Isaiah 50:10–11 (3:241–350). The subtitle summarizes its contents: "A Treatise Shewing The Causes by which, The Cases wherein, and the Ends for which, God Leaves His Children to Distress of Conscience, Together with Directions How to Walk so as to Come Forth of Such a Condition." (b) "The Return of Prayers," based on Ps 85:8, is a uniquely practical work. It offers help in ascertaining "God's answers to our prayers" (3:353–429). (c) "The Trial of a Christian's Growth" (3:433–506), based on John 15:1–2, centers on sanctification, specifically mortification and vivification. This is a mini-classic on spiritual growth. You might also read *The Vanity of Thoughts,* based on Jer 4:14 (3:509–528). This work, often republished in paperback, stresses the need to bring every thought captive to Christ. It also describes ways to foster that obedience.

(3) Read some of Goodwin's great sermons. They are strong, biblical, Christological, and experiential (2:359–425; 4:151–224; 5:439–548; 7:473–576; 9:499–514; 12:1–127).

(4) Delve into Goodwin's works that explain major doctrines, such as:

(a) *An Unregenerate Man's Guiltiness Before God in Respect of Sin and Punishment* (10:1–567). This is a weighty treatise on human guilt, corruption, and the imputation and punishment of sin. In exposing the total depravity of the natural man's heart, this book aims to produce a heartfelt need for saving faith in Christ.

(b) *The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith* (8:1–593). This is a frequently reprinted classic on faith. Part 1, on the *objects of faith*, focuses on God's nature, Christ, and the free grace of God revealed in His absolute promises. Part 2 deals with the *acts of faith*: what it means to believe in Christ, to obtain assurance, to find joy in the Holy Ghost, and to make use of God's electing love. One section beautifully explains the "actings of faith in prayer." Part 3 addresses the *properties of faith*: their excellence in giving all honor to God and Christ, their difficulty in reaching beyond the natural abilities of man, their necessity in requiring us to believe in the strength of God. The conclusion provides "directions to guide us in our endeavours to believe."

(c) *Christ the Mediator* (2 Cor 5:18–19), *Christ Set Forth* (Rom 8:34), and *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth* are great works on Christology (5:1–438; 4:1–92; 4:93–150). *Christ the Mediator* presents Jesus in His substitutionary work of humiliation. It is a classic. *Christ Set Forth* proclaims Christ in His exaltation, and *The Heart of Christ* explores the tenderness of Christ's glorified human nature shown on earth. Goodwin is more mystical in this work than anywhere else in his writings, but as Paul Cook has ably shown, his mysticism is kept within the bounds of Scripture. Cook says Goodwin is unparalleled "in his combination of intellectual and theological power with evangelical and homiletical comfort."[38]

(d) *Gospel Holiness in Heart and Life* (7:129–336) is based on Phil 1:9–11. It explains the doctrine of sanctification in every sphere of life.

(e) *The Knowledge of God the Father, and His Son*

Jesus Christ (4:347–569), combined with *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (6:1–522), explore the profound work in the believer's soul of the three divine persons. *The Work of the Spirit* is particularly helpful for understanding the doctrines of regeneration and conversion. It carefully distinguishes the work of "the natural conscience" from the Spirit's saving work.

(f) *The Glory of the Gospel* (4:227–346) consists of two sermons and a treatise based on Col 1:26–27. It should be read along with *The Blessed State of Glory Which the Saints Possess After Death* (7:339–472), based on Rev 14:13.

(g) *A Discourse of Election* (9:1–498) delves into issues such as the supralapsarian-infralapsarian debate, which wrestles with the moral or rational order of God's decrees. It also deals with the fruits of election (e.g., see Book IV on 1 Peter 5:10 and Book V on how God fulfills His covenant of grace in the generations of believers).

(h) *The Creatures and the Condition of Their State by Creation* (7:1–128) is Goodwin's most philosophical work.

(5) Prayerfully and slowly digest Goodwin's nine-hundred-plus page exposition of Ephesians 1:1 to 2:11 (1:1–564; 2:1–355). Alexander Whyte wrote of this work, "Not even Luther on the Galatians is such an expositor of Paul's mind and heart as is Goodwin on the Ephesians."[39]

(6) Save for last Goodwin's exposition of Revelation (3:1–226) and his only polemical work, *The Constitution, Right Order, and Government of the Churches of Christ* (11:1–546). Independents would highly value this polemic, while Presbyterians probably would not, saying Goodwin is trustworthy on nearly every subject except church government. Goodwin's work does not degrade Presbyterians, however. A contemporary who argued against Goodwin's view on church government confessed that Goodwin conveyed "a truly great and noble spirit" throughout the work.

Whichever Puritan you choose, familiarize yourself with his various writings. With major and voluminous works be sure to note earlier writings from later writings. This is particularly important with Puritans such as Owen. The young Owen did not agree completely with the later Owen in certain areas, such as the necessity of the atonement. Familiarity with these matters will help you grasp the particular nuances of individual Puritans.

SOME OF MY FAVORITE PURITANS

My favorite Puritan-minded theologian from the English tradition is Anthony Burgess, from the Dutch tradition, Wilhelmus á Brakel, and from the Scottish tradition, Samuel Rutherford. Let me explain why.

Anthony Burgess (d. 1664)

In my opinion, Anthony Burgess, vicar of Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire from 1635 to 1662, is the most underrated Puritan of all time. I once asked Iain Murray why Burgess was not included in the nineteenth-century sets of the works of the best Puritans. He responded that Burgess was the greatest glaring omission from those reprints.

In fifteen years (1646–1661), Burgess wrote at least a dozen books based largely on his sermons and lectures. His writings reveal a scholarly acquaintance with Aristotle, Seneca, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. He made judicious use of Greek and Latin quotations while reasoning in the plain style of Puritan preaching. Burgess was a cultured scholar and experimental preacher who produced astute, warm, devotional writings.

Burgess wrote about the mysteries of God and was also an experimental writer. He masterfully separated the precious from the vile in *The Godly Man's Choice,* based on thirteen sermons on Ps 4:6–8. His detailed exegesis in his 145-sermon work on John 17, his 300-page commentary on 1 Corinthians 3, and his 700-page commentary on 2 Corinthians 1 are heart-warming. They fulfilled

Burgess's goal to "endeavour the true and sound Exposition ... so as to reduce all Doctrinals and controversials to practicals and experimentals, which is the life and soul of all."[40]

Several of Burgess's major works are polemical. His first major treatise, *Vindiciae Legis* (1646), based on twenty-nine lectures given at Lawrence-Jewry, vindicated the Puritan view of the moral law and the covenants of works and grace in opposition to Roman Catholics, Arminians, Socinians, and Antinomians. Two years later, Burgess wrote against the same opponents, plus Baxter, in his first volume on justification. He refuted Baxter's work for its Arminian tendencies in arguing for a process of justification that involves the cooperation of divine grace with human works. His second volume on justification, which appeared six years later (1654), discusses the natural righteousness of God and the imputed righteousness of Christ. Those two volumes contain seventy-five sermons. His 555-page *Doctrine of Original Sin* (1659) drew Anabaptists into the fray.

Burgess's best and largest work, *Spiritual Refining: The Anatomy of True and False Conversion* (1652–54)—two volumes of 1,100 pages—has been called an "unequaled anatomy of experimental religion." The first volume, subtitled *A Treatise of Grace and Assurance,* contains 120 sermons; the second, subtitled *A Treatise of Sin, with its Causes, Differences, Mitigations and Aggravations,* contains 42 sermons.[41]

In the first section of the first volume, Burgess refutes the antinomian error that internal marks of grace in a believer are no evidence of his justification. In our opinion, the first sixty pages of the facsimile edition include the best short treatment on assurance in all Puritan literature. Here is one choice quotation in which Burgess shows the need to give priority to Christ and His promises rather than to the marks of grace in ascertaining one's assurance:

> We must take heed that we do not so gaze upon ourselves to find graces in our own hearts as thereby we forget those Acts of Faith, whereby we close with Christ immediately, and rely upon him only for our Justification.... The fear of this hath made some cry down totally the use of signs, to evidence our Justification. And the truth is, it cannot be denied but many of the children of God, while they are studying and examining, whether grace be in their souls, that upon the discovery thereof, they may have comfortable persuasions of their Justification, are very much neglective of those choice and principal Acts of Faith, whereby we have an acquiescency or recumbency upon Christ for our Acceptation with God. This is as if old Jacob should so rejoice in the Chariot Joseph sent, whereby he knew that he was alive, that he should not desire to see Joseph himself. Thus while thou art so full of joy, to perceive grace in thee, thou forgettest to joy in Christ himself, who is more excellent than all thy graces.[42]

Sections two and three describe numerous signs of grace. The remaining nine sections of this volume discuss grace in terms of regeneration, the new creature, God's workmanship, grace in the heart, washing or sanctifying grace, conversion, softening the stony heart, God's Spirit within us, and vocation or calling. Throughout, Burgess distinguishes saving grace from its counterfeits.

In the second volume of *Spiritual Refining,* Burgess focuses on sin. He addresses the deceitfulness of the human heart, presumptuous and reigning sins, hypocrisy and formality in religion, a misguided conscience, and secret sins that often go unrecognized. Positively, he explains the tenderness of a gracious heart, showing "that a strict scrutiny into a man's heart and ways, with a holy fear of sinning, doth consist with a Gospel-life of faith and joy in the Holy Ghost." His goal, as stated on the title page, is to "unmask counterfeit Christians, terrify the ungodly, comfort and direct the doubting saint, humble man, [and] exalt the grace of God."

I discovered Burgess's *Spiritual Refining* a few

days before completing my doctoral dissertation on assurance of faith in the mid-1980s. When I read the first sixty pages of this masterpiece, I was overwhelmed at Burgess's scriptural clarity, insightful exegesis, balance, thoroughness, and depth. I spent two days incorporating some of Burgess's key thoughts into my dissertation. Later, when called on to speak on Burgess's life and his views on assurance for the Westminster Conference (1997), I acquired a nearly complete collection of his writings and immersed myself in them. That fall Burgess surpassed Goodwin as my favorite Puritan author, and has remained so ever since. One of my goals is to bring several of Burgess's works back into print—or better yet, do a complete edition of his works.

• *Recommended reading:* Burgess's *Spiritual Refining.*

Wilhelmus á Brakel (1635–1711)

Wilhelmus á Brakel was a prominent preacher and writer of the *Nadere Reformatie* (Dutch Further Reformation). This movement of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries paralleled English Puritanism.[43] Like English Puritanism, the *Nadere Reformatie* stressed the necessity of vital Christian piety, was true to the teachings of Scripture and the Reformed confessions, and consistently highlighted how faith and godliness work in all aspects of daily life. Consequently, I feel justified in including Dutch "Puritans" in a selection of favorite authors.

I was once asked what book I would take with me if I were stranded on a desert island. My choice was Wilhelmus à Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service.*[44] In my opinion, this is the most valuable set of books available in English today because of the rich doctrinal, experiential, practical, pastoral, and ethical content this classic conveys. For centuries this set of books was as popular in the Netherlands as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was in English-speaking countries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most Dutch farmers of Reformed persuasion would read a few pages of "Father Brakel," as he was fondly called, every evening during family worship. When they completed the entire work, they would start over!

This massive work is arranged in three parts. The first volume and most of the second consist of a traditional Reformed systematic theology that is packed with clear thinking, thorough presentation, and helpful application. The concluding applications at the end of each chapter applying the particular doctrines are the highlight of this section. I believe à Brakel's practical casuistry in these applications supersedes any other systematic theologian in his day and ever since. They represent Reformed, Puritan, experiential theology at its best.

The second part expounds Christian ethics and Christian living. This largest section of à Brakel's work is packed with salient applications on topics pertinent to living as a Christian in this world. In addition to a masterful treatment of the ten commandments (chs. 45–55) and the Lord's Prayer (chs. 68–74), this part addresses topics such as living by faith out of God's promises (ch. 42); how to exercise love toward God and His Son (chs. 56–57); how to fear, obey, and hope in God (chs. 59–61); how to profess Christ and His truth (ch. 63); and how to exercise spiritual graces, such as courage, contentment, self-denial, patience, uprightness, watchfulness, neighborly love, humility, meekness, peace, diligence, compassion, and prudence (chs. 62, 64–67, 76, 82–88). Other topics include fasting (ch. 75), solitude (ch. 77), spiritual meditation (ch. 78), singing (ch. 79), vows (ch. 80), spiritual experience (ch. 81), spiritual growth (ch. 89), backsliding (ch. 90), spiritual desertion (ch. 91), temptations (chs. 92–95), indwelling corruption (ch. 96), and spiritual darkness and deadness (chs. 97–98).

The third part (4:373–538) includes a history of God's redemptive, covenantal work in the world. It is reminiscent of Jonathan Edwards's *History of Redemption,* though not as detailed as Edwards; à Brakel's work confines itself more to

Scripture and has a greater covenantal emphasis. It concludes with a detailed study of the future conversion of the Jews (4:511–38).

The Christian's Reasonable Service is the heartbeat of the Dutch Further Reformation. Here systematic theology and vital, experiential Christianity are scripturally and practically woven within a covenantal framework. The entire work bears the mark of a pastor-theologian richly taught by the Spirit. Nearly every subject treasured by Christians is treated in a helpful way, always aiming for the promotion of godliness.

In my opinion, this pastoral set of books is an essential tool for every pastor and is also valuable for lay people. The book has been freshly translated into contemporary English. Buy and read this great classic. You won't be sorry.

• *Recommended reading:* Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service.*

Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661)

While divided by history, nationality, and race, and to some extent, language, England's Puritans and Scotland's Presbyterians were united by close spiritual bonds of doctrine, worship, and church order. For this reason, I include a Scotsman on my short list of favorite Puritans.

Actually, three Scottish divines have influenced me greatly: Thomas Boston (1676–1732) led me to the depths of my original sin and the beauty and symmetry of covenant theology;[45] Thomas Halyburton (1674–1712) taught me the power of bringing every personal experience to the touchstone of Scripture;[46] and Samuel Rutherford taught me much about loving Christ and being submissive in affliction. For twenty years, I kept a copy of Rutherford's *Letters* (unabridged) on my nightstand, and turned to it countless times when I felt discouraged, challenged, or afflicted. On most occasions, I read until I found my bearings once more in Prince Immanuel. No writer in all of history can so make you fall in love with Christ and embrace your afflictions as Samuel Rutherford can. I agree with Charles Spurgeon who said, "When we are dead and gone let the world know that Spurgeon held Rutherford's *Letters* to be the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere man."[47] I thank God for this great man of God.

Though Boston and Halyburton rate a close second, my favorite Scottish divine is Rutherford, who first pastored in Anwoth, then was exiled to Aberdeen, and later became professor at St. Andrews. Rutherford's heart was a vast treasure chest filled with unspeakable love for God. Rutherford wrote as one whose heart transcended this world and lighted upon eternal shores. In the midst of trial and affliction, he wrote, "Christ hath so handsomely fitted for my shoulders, this rough tree of the cross, as that it hurteth me no ways."[48] Even on his deathbed, Rutherford focused on Christ. To those gathered around him, he said, "This night will close the door, and fasten my anchor within the veil.... Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land!"[49] In life and in death, he found his Savior "altogether lovely" (Song 4:16). "No pen, no words, no image can express to you the loveliness of my only, only Lord Jesus," he wrote.[50] This is what makes him so devotional, so beneficial, so engaging to read.

Most of Rutherford's letters (220 of 365) were written while he was in exile. The letters beautifully harmonize Reformed doctrine and the spiritual experiences of a believer. They basically cover six topics: (1) Rutherford's love and desire for Christ, (2) his deep sense of the heinousness of sin, (3) his devotion for the cause of Christ, (4) his profound sympathy for burdened and troubled souls, (5) his profound love for his flock, and (6) his ardent longings for heaven.[51]

Although he did not write his letters for publication, the compilation of them is Rutherford's most popular work. It has been reprinted more than eighty times in English, fifteen times in Dutch, and several times in German and French and Gaelic.

Several of Rutherford's diversified writings have also been republished. His *Communion Sermons*

(1870s), a compilation of fourteen sacramental sermons, was recently published by Westminster Publishing House. *The Covenant of Life Opened* (1655), an exegetical defense of covenant theology, was edited and republished by Puritan Publications. In this, Rutherford reveals himself as an apt apologist and polemicist in defending the bi-covenantal structure of Scripture. His work *Lex Rex* has become a standard in law curriculum; nearly every member of the Westminster Assembly owned a copy. This book helped instigate the Covenanters' resistance to King Charles I and was later used to justify the French and American revolutions. History has generally regarded this work as one of the greatest contributions to political science.

In addition, Soli Deo Gloria has republished *Quaint Sermons of Samuel Rutherford* (1885), composed from compiled shorthand notes from a listener. The warmth of Rutherford's preaching is particularly evident in "The Spouse's Longing for Christ." Like many divines in his day, Rutherford drafted his own catechism, *Rutherford's Catechism: or, The Sum of Christian Religion* (1886), recently reprinted by Blue Banner Publications. This was most likely written during the Westminster Assembly and is filled with many quaint sayings. *The Trial and Triumph of Faith* (1645) contains twenty-seven sermons on Christ's saving work in the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21–28). In nearly every sermon, Rutherford shows the overflowing grace of Christ to Gentiles. He explores the nature of genuine prayer and addresses practical aspects of the trial of faith. Most recently, Banner of Truth published *The Loveliness of Christ* (2007), a little book that contains Christ-centered quotes from Rutherford.

Rutherford's *Letters,* however, remain the author's masterpiece. They are filled with pastoral advice, comfort, rebuke, and encouragement.

• *Recommended reading:* Rutherford's *Letters.*

More Puritan Favorites

It is difficult to conclude this section, for I would love to include so many more Puritan authors. But, to keep this list concise, I will conclude with a list of ten favorite Puritans:

(1) *Anthony Burgess* (see above)

(2) *Thomas Goodwin* (see above)

(3) *John Owen* (1616–1683): This author's sixteen volumes of works, seven volumes on Hebrews, and a book titled *Biblical Theology,* make up a learned library.[52] The sixteen-volume set, which is a reprint of the 1850–55 Goold edition, includes the following:

Doctrinal (vols. 1–5). The most noteworthy works in these volumes are: *On the Person and Glory of Christ* (vol. 1); *Communion with God* (vol. 2); *Discourse on the Holy Spirit* (vol. 3); and *Justification by Faith* (vol. 5). Mastery of these works, Spurgeon wrote, "is to be a profound theologian."

Practical (vols. 6–9). Especially worthy here are *Mortification of Sin, Temptation, Exposition of Psalm 130* (vol. 6); and *Spiritual-Mindedness* (vol. 7). Volumes 8 and 9 comprise sermons. These books are suitable for the average layperson and have immense practical applications.

Controversial (vols. 10–16). Noteworthy are *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* and *Divine Justice* (vol. 10); *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance* (vol. 11); *True Nature of a Gospel Church* and *The Divine Original of the Scriptures* (vol. 16). Several works in this section have historical significance (particularly those written against Arminianism and Socinianism) but tend to be tedious for a non-theologian.

Owen's wide range of subjects, insightful writing, exhaustive doctrinal studies, profound theology, and warm devotional approach explain why so many people regard his work with such high esteem. Owen may be wordy on occasion, but he is never dry. His works are invaluable for all who wish to explore the rich legacy left by one who is often called "Prince of the Puritans."

Dozens of Owen's works have been published individually in the past half century, but I advise serious readers of Puritan literature to purchase the sixteen-volume set of Owen's works. For those who have difficulty reading Owen, I recommend

R. J. K. Law's abridged and simplified editions of *Communion with God* (1991), *Apostasy from the Gospel* (1992), *The Glory of Christ* (1994), and *The Holy Spirit* (1998), all published by the Banner of Truth Trust.

I was most influenced by Owen when I spent the summer of 1985 studying his views on assurance. The two books that influenced me most were Owen's treatment of Psalm 130, particularly verse 4, and his amazing *Communion with God,* which focuses on experiential communion between a believer and individual persons of the Trinity.

(4) *Jonathan Edwards* (1703–1758): A class at Westminster Theological Seminary, taught by Sam Logan, motivated me to read most of Edwards's two-volume works in 1983.[53] His sermons convicted and comforted me beyond words. What a master wordsmith Edwards was!

More than sixty volumes of Edwards's writings have been published in the last fifty years.[54] The two books that influenced me most were *Religious Affections,* which is often regarded as the leading classic in American history on spiritual life, and Edwards's sermons on justification by faith.[55] Earlier, I was greatly influenced by *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*.[56]

I was touched by Edwards's concept of "fittedness" throughout his writings, and have often found that concept a great tool for leadership and decision-making. Edwards grounded this concept in God; a God who is always fitting will guide His people to want to do what is fitting in each life situation to bring Him the most glory. Hence, we must ask of every decision we face: What is most fitting in God's sight according to His Word? What will bring God the most honor?

(5) *William Perkins* (1558–1602): Perkins's vision of reform for the church combined with his intellect, piety, writing, spiritual counseling, and communication skills helped set the tone for the seventeenth-century Puritan accent on Reformed, experiential truth and self-examination, and Puritan arguments against Roman Catholicism and Arminianism. Perkins as rhetorician, expositor, theologian, and pastor became the principle architect of the Puritan movement. By the time of his death, Perkins's writings in England were outselling those of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Henry Bullinger combined. He "moulded the piety of a whole nation," H. C. Porter said.[57] Little wonder, then, that Perkins is often called the father of Puritanism.

Perkins first influenced me while I was studying assurance of faith for my doctoral dissertation. Ten years later, his *Art of Prophesying,* a short homiletic textbook for Puritan seminarians, helped me understand how to address listeners according to their various cases of conscience.[58] My appreciation for Perkins has increased over the years. I look forward to spending more time reading his works as general editor with Derek Thomas on a ten-volume reprint of Perkins's works.[59]

(6) *Thomas Watson* (c. 1620–1686): Watson was my favorite Puritan after I was converted in my mid-teens. I read his *Body of Divinity* as a daily devotional. His *All Things for Good* was a wonderful balm for my troubled soul in a period of intense affliction in the early 1980s. His winsome writing includes deep doctrine, clear expression, warm spirituality, appropriate applications, and colorful illustrations. I love his pithy, quotable style of writing.[60]

(7) *Thomas Brooks* (1608–1680): Brooks became my favorite Puritan writer in my late teens. His *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices, The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod, Heaven on Earth: A Treatise on Assurance,* "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ" (vol. 3), "The Crown and Glory of Christianity" (vol. 4)—a classic on holiness consisting of 58 sermons on Heb 12:14—all ministered to me. Brooks's books are real page-turners. He often brought me to tears of joy over Christ and tears of sorrow over sin. His writings exude spiritual life and power.[61]

(8) *John Flavel* (1628–1691): With the exception of Jonathan Edwards, no Puritan divine was more helpful for me in sermon preparation as a young minister than Flavel. His sermons on Christ's suf-

fering also greatly blessed my soul. What lover of Puritan literature has not been blessed by Flavel's classics: *The Mystery of Providence, Keeping the Heart, The Fountain of Life, Christ Knocking at the Door of the Heart,* and *The Method of Grace*?[62]

(9) *John Bunyan* (1628–1688): When I was nine years old and first experienced a period of conviction of sin, I read Bunyan's *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. When I saw the book in my father's bookcase, I figured that since I had such a bad heart, that book must be for me!

More importantly, my father read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* to us every Sunday evening after church. When he finished, he started over. I must have listened to that book fifteen times. From the age of fourteen on, I would ask questions about how the Holy Spirit works in the soul, about Mr. Talkative, the Man in the Iron Cage, the House of the Interpreter, and scores of other characters and matters. My father often wept as he answered my questions. When I became a minister, I realized what a rare gift those sessions were. Forty years later, illustrations from Bunyan's great classic still come to mind while I'm preaching.[63]

(10) *Thomas Vincent* (1634–1678): When we find ourselves cold and listless, Vincent can help kindle the fire of Christian love. Just try reading *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ* (1677) without having your affections raised to heavenly places and yearning to love Christ more. Let *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ* be your frequent companion.

Only a handful of Vincent's writings were ever published, and of those, only six have been reprinted in the past fifty years. In addition to *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ,* Vincent wrote *The Shorter Catechism Explained from Scripture* (1673), a very helpful book for young people and children; and *The Good Work Begun* (1673), an evangelistic book for young people, explaining how God saves sinners and preserves them for Himself. Three additional books by Vincent are more solemn treatises. They include *God's Terrible Voice in the City* (1667), an eyewitness account of London's Great Fire and Great Plague and an analysis of how God judges wickedness in a city; *Christ's Certain and Sudden Appearance to Judgment* (1667), which was also written after the Great Fire of London and was designed to prepare sinners for the great and terrible Day of the Lord; and *Fire and Brimstone* (1670) was written to warn sinners to flee the wrath to come. All of these titles, minus *The Shorter Catechism*, were reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria Publications from 1991 to 2001.[64]

Vincent's works are uniquely refreshing. He used the English language in a captivating way to glorify God and strike at the heart of Christians. It is no wonder that Vincent's works were bestsellers in the eighteenth century.[65]

IDEAS FOR PRINTING THE PURITANS

If you are skeptical about reading Puritan authors, thinking them outdated and no longer applicable for today, think again. Puritans have much to offer to spiritually hungry young people and older folk today. Though some Puritan titles are not worthy of reprinting, there still are hundreds of great Puritan titles that have not been reprinted since the seventeenth century. At Reformation Heritage Books, we envision bringing many of these back into print by using a five-tier approach:

First, a radical purist approach (that is, no changes in punctuation or word choice, though spelling may or may not be updated), which is reserved mostly for scholars and libraries. This is the approach of Chad Van Dixhoorn and Reformation Heritage Books in printing definitive volumes related to Westminster Assembly materials, including the reprinting in facsimile form of all the books written by Westminster Assembly divines. This will offer an expanding library of English Puritan literature to a new generation of scholars. Such books are not intended for most laypeople.

Second, Reformation Heritage Books will continue to print several Puritan titles per year using the purist approach, which means chang-

ing a minimal number of words and punctuation. With this approach, we will print titles under our Soli Deo Gloria imprint. Approximately ten thousand people continue to buy such material, but the readership is shrinking as people move away from the Authorized Version of the Bible and eventually can no longer grasp old fashioned language without hard work.

Third, more substantial editing will be done on other Puritan titles. Examples of this include Sinclair Ferguson's substantial editing of William Perkins's *The Art of Prophesying,* published by Banner of Truth Trust, and to a somewhat lesser degree, my editing on Soli Deo Gloria's first printing of Thomas Watson's *Heaven Taken by Storm.* This approach would retain the Authorized Version of the Bible for scriptural quotations and the Thee/Thou usage for Deity, with accompanying verb forms, so that it does not read like it is altogether removed from its historical milieu, but would use contemporary pronouns and verb forms for others. Obsolete illustrations would be contemporized or deleted. The advantage of this approach is that it will enhance readability and sales. It is not a coincidence that the top-selling Soli Deo Gloria book for many years was the one edited most thoroughly.

A fourth level is to rewrite Puritan books, using the author's main thoughts. This is the approach Ernest Kevan used with *Moral Law* a few decades ago to summarize Anthony Burgess's work, reducing it from several hundred pages to about one hundred pages. More recently, Stephen Yuille used this approach to rewrite George Swinnock's *The Fading of the Flesh and the Flourishing of Faith*. Reformation Heritage Books is using this book as its inaugural volume in a new series titled Puritan Treasures for Today. Kris Lundgaard also used this approach in rewriting John Owen's *The Enemy Within.* To date, this book has sold more than sixty thousand copies. This type of editing may become the preferred way to print Puritan titles to appeal to more contemporary readers.

A fifth level is combining several authors' thoughts under a theme. James La Belle and I are experimenting with this approach as we launch the first volume of a series titled Deepen Your Christian Life. In the first volume, *Living by God's Promises,* we draw heavily from three Puritan treatises on God's promises, written by Edward Leigh, William Spurstowe, and Andrew Gray. The next two projected volumes are *Living Zealously* and *Living with a Good Conscience.* In each case, we use extracts from a number of Puritan works, collate their thoughts, then write a book on the subject for the average layperson.

When levels three through five are used, it is critical that the editor and/or author is very familiar with how Puritans think, so as to avoid misrepresentation. It remains to be seen whether levels three through five will sell more books than level two, but early indications are encouraging.

CONCLUDING ADVICE

Where our culture is lacking, the Puritans abounded. J. I. Packer says, "Today, Christians in the West are found to be on the whole passionless, passive, and one fears, prayerless."[66] The Puritans were passionate, zealous, and prayerful. Let us be as the author of Hebrews says, "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (6:12). The Puritans demanded a hearing in their own day, and they deserve one today as well. They are spiritual giants upon whose shoulders we should stand.

Their books still praise the Puritans in the gates. Reading the Puritans will keep you on the right path theologically, experientially, and practically. As Packer writes, "The Puritans were strongest just where Protestants today are weakest, and their writings can give us more real help than those of any other body of Christian teachers, past or present, since the days of the apostles."[67] I have been reading Christian literature for nearly forty-four years and can freely say that I know of no group of writers in church history that can benefit the mind and soul more than the Puritans. God used their books for my spiritual formation and to help me

grow in understanding. They are still teaching me what John the Baptist said, "Christ must increase and I must decrease" (John 3:30)—which is, I believe, a core definition of sanctification.

In his endorsement of *Meet the Puritans*, R. C. Sproul wrote, "The recent revival of interest in and commitment to the truths of Reformed theology is due in large measure to the rediscovery of Puritan literature. The Puritans of old have become the prophets for our time." So, our prayer is that God will inspire you to read Puritan writings. With the Spirit's blessing, they will enrich your life as they open the Scriptures to you, probe your conscience, bare yours sins, lead you to repentance, and conform your life to Christ. By the Spirit's grace, let the Puritans bring you to full assurance of salvation and a lifestyle of gratitude to the Triune God for His great salvation.

Finally, consider giving Puritan books to your friends. There is no better gift than a good book. I sometimes wonder what would happen if Christians spent fifteen minutes a day reading Puritan writings. Over a year that would add up to about twenty books and fifteen hundred books over a lifetime. Who knows how the Holy Spirit might use such a spiritual diet of reading! Would it usher in a worldwide revival? Would it fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord from sea to sea? That is my prayer. *Tolle Lege*—take up and read!

ENDNOTES

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[3]George Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A….: containing all his sermons and tracts which have been already published: with a select collection of letters* (London: printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771–72), 4:307.

[4]Cited in Steven C. Kettler, *Biblical Counsel: Resources for Renewal* (Newark, DE: Letterman Associates, 1993), 311.

[5]Ligon Duncan, *Calvin for Today* (ed. Joel R. Beeke; Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2010), 231.

[6]For a biography of each of these authors and a mini-review of each of these titles, see Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans, with a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2006). This book also includes Scottish and Dutch divines whose mindsets are parallel with the English Puritans.

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[8]Cornelis Pronk, "Puritan Christianity," *The Messenger* (March 1997): 5.

[9]William Greenhill, *Exposition on the Prophet of Ezekiel* (London: Samuel Holdsworth, 1839), 110.

[10]Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 32. Venning is citing Bunyan.

[11]John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000), 6:85.

[12]John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 1:42.

[13]Thomas Adams, *The Works of Thomas Adams* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1862), 3:224.

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[16]Edmund Calamy, *Sermons Concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London, 1722), 6.

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[19]J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 24.

[20]William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002), 7.

[21]Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001), 4:383.

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[28]William S. Barker, *Puritan Profiles* (Fearn: Mentor, 1999).

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[31]John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1963).

[32]George Swinnock, *The Fading of the Flesh and the Flourishing of Faith* (ed. Stephen Yuille; Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009).

[33]*The Works of John Flavel* (6 vols.; repr., London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968); *The Works of George Swinnock* (5 vols.; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2002).

[34]Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998), Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968).

[35]*The Works of John Bunyan* (3 vols.; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004).

[36]For the reprinting of the original preface, see *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 1:xxix–xxxii.

[37]Edmund Calamy, *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (ed. Samuel Palmer; London: Alex Hogg, 1778), 1:186.

[38]Paul Cook, "Thomas Goodwin—Mystic?" in *Diversities of Gifts* (London: Westminster Conference, 1981), 45–56.

[39]Alexander Whyte, *Thirteen Appreciations* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1913), 162.

[40]Anthony Burgess, *Second Corinthians 1,* intro.

[41]International Outreach has recently done two two-volume editions of Burgess's *Spiritual Refining* (Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, 1986–96). Only one hundred copies were printed of the first edition, a facsimile, which contains the complete unabridged text of 1658. The second edition of *Spiritual Refining,* an abridged edition, is worth the investment for those who have difficulty reading facsimile print, though choice sections have been removed.

[42]Ibid., 1:41.

[43]For summaries of the *Nadere Reformatie* in English, see Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 383–413; Fred A. van Lieburg, "From Pure Church to Pious Culture: The Further Reformation in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic," in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives* (ed. W. Fred Graham; Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 409–30.

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[47]Charles Spurgeon, *The Sword and the Trowel,* 189.

[48]Samuel Rutherford, *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), 144.

[49]Ibid., 21-22

[50]Samuel Rutherford, *The Loveliness of Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2007), 88.

[51]Adapted from Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans,* 729–30.

[52]John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (16 vols.; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996); idem, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (7 vols.; London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985); idem, *Biblical Theology* (trans. Stephen Westcott; Morgan, PA: Soli

Deo Gloria, 1994).

[53]Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974). Cf. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (26 vols.; New Haven: Yale, 1957–2008). Each volume in the Yale series has been thoroughly edited by scholars, and includes, on average, 35 to 150 pages of introduction. This series is essential for aspiring scholars of Edwards. Those interested in reading Edwards for devotional benefit could better purchase the two volume edition of his *Works*, since the Yale volumes are expensive.

[54]Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans,* 193–233.

[55]Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001); idem, *Justification by Faith Alone,* (Morgan, Penn.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000).

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[64]Thomas Vincent, *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994); idem, *The Shorter Catechism Explained from Scripture* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991); idem, *The Good Work Begun: A Puritan Pastor Speaks to Teenagers* (Morgan, Penn.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999); idem, *God's Terrible Voice in the City* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997); idem, *Christ's Certain and Sudden Appearance to Judgment* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001); idem, *Fire and Brimstone* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999).

[65]Andrew R. Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice, 1770-1840* (England: Oxford University, 2006), 277.

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Word and Space, Time and Act: The Shaping of English Puritan Piety

Michael A. G. Haykin

Spirituality lies at the very core of English Puritanism, that late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century movement that sought to reform the Church of England and, failing to do so, splintered into a variety of denominations, such as English Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Particular (i.e., Calvinistic) and General (i.e., Arminian) Baptist.[1] Whatever else the Puritans may have been—social, political, and eccelsiastical Reformers—they were primarily men and women intensely passionate about piety and Christian experience. By and large united in their Calvinism, the Puritans believed that every aspect of their spiritual lives came from the work of the Holy Spirit. They had, in fact, inherited from the continental Reformers of the sixteenth century, and from John Calvin (1506–64) in particular, "a constant and even distinctive concern" with the person and work of the Holy Spirit.[2] Benjamin B. Warfield (1851–1921), the distinguished American Presbyterian theologian, can actually speak of Calvin as "preeminently the theologian of the Holy Spirit."[3] Of his Puritan heirs and their interest in the Spirit, Warfield has this to say:

> The formulation of the doctrine of the work of the Spirit waited for the Reformation and for Calvin, and ... the further working out of the details of this doctrine and its enrichment by the profound study of Christian minds and meditation of Christian hearts has come down from Calvin only to the Puritans.... [I]t is only the truth to say that Puritan thought was almost entirely occupied with loving study of the work of the Holy Spirit, and found its highest expression in dogmatico-practical expositions of the several aspects of it.[4]

Now, this Puritan interest in the work of the

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Spirit and spirituality can be examined along two central axes: first, the Puritan focus on the Word, in keeping with the Reformation assertion of *sola scriptura*, which led to an elevation of preaching as *the* primary means of grace and a distinct spirituality of space; and, second, a distinct spirituality of time that was oriented around the Sabbath and that provided a context for worship and prayer, meditation and good deeds.

A SPIRITUALITY OF THE WORD

In 1994 the British Library paid the equivalent of well over two million dollars for a book that the library administration at the time deemed to be the most important acquisition in the history of the library. The book? A copy of the New Testament. Of course, it was not just any copy. In fact, there are only two other New Testaments like this one in existence. The New Testament that the British Museum purchased was lodged for many years in the library of the oldest Baptist seminary in the world, Bristol Baptist College in Bristol, England. It was printed in the German town of Worms on the press of Peter Schoeffer in 1526 and is known as the Tyndale New Testament. The first printed New Testament to be translated into English out of the original Greek, it is indeed an invaluable book. Its translator, after whom it is named, was William Tyndale (d. 1536). Of his overall significance in the history of the church, the article on him in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* rightly states that he was "one of the greatest forces of the English Reformation," a man whose writings "helped to shape the thought of the Puritan party in England."[5] Tyndale's influence on the Puritans is nowhere clearer than in his view of the Scriptures, for he helped to give them a spirituality of the Word.

In strong contrast to medieval Roman Catholicism where piety was focused on the proper performance of certain external rituals, Tyndale, like the rest of the Reformers, emphasized that at the heart of Christianity was faith, which presupposed an understanding of what was believed. Knowledge of the Scriptures was, therefore, essential to Christian spirituality.

Tyndale's determination to give the people of England the Word of God so gripped him that from the mid-1520s till his martyrdom in 1536 his life was directed to this sole end. What lay behind this single-minded vision was a particular view of God's Word. In his "Prologue" to his translation of Genesis, which he wrote in 1530, Tyndale could state, "the Scripture is a light, and sheweth us the true way, both what to do and what to hope for; and a defence from all error, and a comfort in adversity that we despair not, and feareth us in prosperity that we sin not."[6] Despite opposition from church authorities and the martyrdom of Tyndale in 1536, the Word of God became absolutely central to the English Reformation. As David Daniell has recently noted in what is the definitive biography of Tyndale, it was Tyndale's translation that made the English people a "People of the Book."[7]

The Reformation thus involved a major shift of emphasis in the cultivation of Christian spirituality. Medieval Roman Catholicism had majored on symbols and images as the means for cultivating spirituality. The Reformation, coming as it did hard on the heels of the invention of the printing press, turned to "words" as the primary vehicle of cultivation, both spoken words and written words. The Puritans were the sons and daughters of the Reformation, and thus not surprisingly "Puritanism was first and foremost a movement centered in Scripture."[8]

CHALLENGING THE PURITAN FOCUS ON THE WORD

The Puritan spirituality of the Word was challenged, though, by radicals to their left. For instance, there were the Muggletonians, founded by Lodowick Muggleton (1609–98) and his cousin John Reeve (1608–58), who believed that they were the two witnesses of Rev 11:3-6, denied the Trinity, rejected preaching and prayer, and argued that the revelation given to them was God's final

word to mankind. Even more dangerous to the Puritan cause were the Quakers, in some ways the counterpart to the charismatic movement of the modern era.

The Quaker movement, which would become a major alternative to Puritanism, had started in the late 1640s when George Fox (1624–91), a shoemaker and part-time shepherd, began to win converts to a perspective on the Christian faith which rejected much of orthodox Puritan theology. Fox and the early Quakers proclaimed the possibility of salvation for all humanity, and urged men and women to turn to the light within them to find salvation. We "call All men to look to the Light within their own consciences," wrote Samuel Fisher (1605–65), a General Baptist turned Quaker; "by the leadings of that Light … they may come to God, and work out their Salvation."[9] Thus, when some Baptists in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire became Quakers and declared that the "light in their consciences was the rule they desire to walk by," not the Scriptures, they were simply expressing what was implicit in the entire Quaker movement.[10]

Isaac Penington the Younger (1616–79) is one early Quaker author who well illustrates this tendency to make the indwelling Spirit rather than the Scriptures the touchstone and final authority for thought and practice. Penington was born into a Puritan household and for a while was a Congregationalist. Converted to Quakerism in 1658 after hearing George Fox preach the previous year, Penington became an important figure in the movement. In the words of J. W. Frost, Penington "remains a prime example of the intellectual sophistication of the second generation of Quaker converts."[11] In a letter that he wrote a fellow Quaker by the name of Nathanael Stonar in 1670, Penington told his correspondent that one of the main differences between themselves and other "professors," namely Calvinistic Puritans, was "concerning *the rule*." While the latter asserted that the Scriptures were the rule by which men and women ought to direct their lives and thinking, Penington was convinced that the indwelling Spirit of life is "nearer and more powerful, than the words, or outward relations concerning those things in the Scriptures." As Penington noted,

> The Lord, in the gospel state, hath promised to be present with his people; not as a wayfaring man, for a night, but to *dwell in them and walk in them.* Yea, if they be tempted and in danger of erring, they shall hear a voice behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk in it." Will they not grant this to be a rule, as well as the Scriptures? Nay, is not this a more full direction to the heart, in that state, than it can pick to itself out of the Scriptures? … [T]he Spirit, which gave forth the words, is greater than the words; therefore we cannot but prize Him himself, and set Him higher in our heart and thoughts, than the words which testify of Him, though they also are very sweet and precious to our taste.[12]

Penington here affirmed that the Quakers esteemed the Scriptures as "sweet and precious," but he was equally adamant that the indwelling Spirit was to be regarded as the supreme authority when it came to direction for Christian living and thinking.[13]

In response to this threat to scriptural authority the Puritans argued that the nature of the Spirit's work in the authors of Scripture was unique and definitely a thing of the past. The Spirit was now *illuminating* that which he had inspired and their experiences of the Spirit were to be tried by the Scriptures. As Richard Baxter (1615–91), the moderate Puritan author and Presbyterian, declared,

> We must not try the Scriptures by our most spiritual apprehensions, but our apprehensions by the Scriptures: that is, we must prefer the Spirit's inspiring the apostles to indite the Scriptures before the Spirit's illuminating of us to understand them, or before any present inspirations, the former being the more perfect; because

> Christ gave the Apostles the Spirit to deliver us infallibly his own commands, and to indite a rule for following ages: but he giveth us the Spirit but to understand and use that rule aright. This trying the Spirit by the Scriptures is not a setting of the Scriptures above the Spirit itself; but it is only a trying of the Spirit by the Spirit; that is, the Spirit's operations in themselves and his revelations to any pretenders now, by the Spirit's operations in the Apostles and by their revelations recorded for our use.[14]

From the Puritan point of view, the Quakers made an unbiblical cleavage between the Spirit and the Word, as the Puritan author Benjamin Keach (1640–1704), the most important Baptist theologian of his generation, pointed out in 1681 in a direct allusion to the Quakers: "Many are confident they have the Spirit, Light, and Power, when 'tis all meer Delusion. The Spirit always leads and directs according to the written Word: "He shall bring my Word," saith Christ, "to your remembrance" [cf. John 14:26]."[15]

Lest it be thought that the Puritans, in their desire to safeguard a spirituality of the Word, went to the opposite extreme and depreciated the importance of the work of the Spirit in the Christian life, one needs to note the words of the *Second London Confession* 1.5, where it is stated that "our full perswasion, and assurance of the infallible truth" of the Scriptures comes neither from "the testimony of the Church of God" nor from the "heavenliness of the matter" of the Scriptures, the "efficacy of [their] Doctrine," and "the Majesty of [their] Stile." Rather it is only "the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our Hearts" that convinces believers that God's Word is indeed what it claims to be.[16]

In essence, then, Puritan spirituality was a bibliocentric spirituality. The London Baptist William Kiffin (1616–1701), writing about a fellow Puritan and Baptist, John Norcott (1621–76), well captures the heart of this Word-centered spirituality when he states,

> He steered his whole course by the compass of the word, making Scripture precept or example his constant rule in matters of religion. Other men's opinions or interpretations were not the standard by which he went; but, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, he laboured to find out what the Lord himself had said in his word.[17]

A SPIRITUALITY OF SPACE FOCUSED ON THE PULPIT

Given this estimation of the Scriptures, it is not surprising that the preaching of the Word was regarded by the Puritans as utterly vital to both worship and spirituality. As Irwony Morgan puts it, "the essential thing in understanding the puritans is that they were preachers before they were anything else."[18] For the Puritans the pulpit was "a place of nurture, of fire and light,"[19] a place that stirred up hearts to follow after Christ, a place that brought sight to the blind and further enlightenment to believers.

Nicholas Bound, a Suffolk Puritan minister, who published the first major Puritan exposition of Sunday as the Sabbath, *A True Doctrine of the Sabbath* (1595), could declare that preaching the Word of God is "the greatest part of God's service."[20] The Elizabethan Puritan Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) was just as enthusiastic about preaching. "It is a gift of all gifts," he wrote, "God esteems it so, Christ esteems it so, and so should we esteem it."[21] Again, Arthur Hildersham (1563–1632), the son of zealous Roman Catholics who had hoped that their son would become a Roman Catholic priest and who was disinherited after his conversion, could state, "Preaching … is the chief work that we are called of God to exercise ourselves in."[22] And in the association records of the Northern Baptist Association, which was composed of Baptist churches in the old counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Durham, we read the following answer to the question posed in 1701 as to whether "any Preaching disciple may Administer the Ordinance of the Lords Supper and Baptisme": "Those Persons that

the Church approves of to Preach the Gospel we think it safe to Approve likewise for ye Administering other Ordinances *Preaching being the greater work*." In 1703, when a similar question was asked, it was stated that "those whom the Church Approves to preach the Gospel may also Administer the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper *Preaching being the main and principall Work of the Gospel*."[23]

The architecture of seventeenth-century Puritan churches also bespoke this emphasis on the preached word in worship: *the* central feature of these simple structures was the pulpit. Early Puritan chapels were "meeting houses designed for preaching."[24] These meeting-houses were generally square or rectangular structures, some of them from the outside even resembling barns.[25] Inside the meeting-house the pulpit was made prominent and was well within the sight and sound of the entire congregation. Sometimes a sounding board was placed behind the pulpit so as to help project the preacher's voice throughout the building. There was a noticeable lack of adornment in Puritan meeting-houses, with nothing to distract the attention of the worshippers. It was the Puritan spirituality of the Word that shaped this way of using space for worship and for the cultivation of Christian piety.

"GOOD SABBATHS MAKE GOOD CHRISTIANS": THE PURITAN SPIRITUALITY OF TIME

It was also this bibliocentric spirituality that shaped the Puritan understanding of time. The Puritans radically excised from their calendars all non-biblical festivals—not only saints' feast-days but also Easter and Christmas—and instead focused on one day, the Sabbath. In their reading of the fourth commandment—"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exod 20:8), or as it appears in Deut 5:12: "Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy"—this command now applies to what is the first day of the week, i.e., Sunday, so that it has in effect become the Christian Sabbath. There were very few Puritans who argued that the day of worship had to be the actual Sabbath of the old covenant. For instance, Edward Stennett (d. 1691), the first of a long-line of Stennetts who were pastors of Seventh-Day Baptist congregations, could write a book entitled *The Royal Law Contended for* (1667), of which part of the subtitle was *The Seventh-Day-Sabbath proved from the Beginning, from the Law, from the Prophets, from Christ, from his Apostles, to be a duty yet incumbent upon all men*.[26]

But such a position was in a definite minority. The bulk of the Puritans maintained that one of the aspects of the coming of the new covenant was the transformation of Sunday into the Sabbath. In fact, in the words of J. I. Packer, it was they who "created the English Christian Sunday."[27] Moreover, they devoted what at first sight seems to be an inordinate amount of literature to this subject. The depth of this interest in the Sabbath must first be understood before one can come to any appreciation of the Puritan Sabbath spirituality.

If, as has been noted above, the Puritans regarded the preaching of the Word of God as such a primary means of grace, if not *the* primary means, then the context in which that word was preached, namely, on Sunday, was also vitally important. Thus Puritan author after Puritan author declared that growth in grace and sanctification depended upon proper observance of the Sabbath. "The very life of piety is preserved by a due sanctification of the Lord's day. They put a knife to the throat of religion, that hinder the same," writes William Gouge (1578–1653), a Puritan leader in the city of London who ranked alongside Richard Sibbes as one of the most significant Puritan figures of the early Stuart period. Again, here is William Perkins (1558–1602), the prominent Elizabethan Puritan: "We must learn to sanctify the Sabbath of the Lord, for else we shall never increase in faith, knowledge, or obedience as we should."[28]

It is this controlling vision of the Sabbath that prompted many of the Puritans to label it the

marctura animae, the market day of the soul. Sunday was the day when the soul was nourished by products from the market of the Word. In a tract entitled *The Law and Gospell Reconciled* (1631), Henry Burton (1578–1648) could write, Sunday is "the market day of our souls, wherein we come to God's house the market place, to buy the wine and milk of the word, without money, or money worth. How is that? By hearing and harkening to God's word."[29]

Although the Puritans believed that all time was holy, since all time belonged to God, they were realists who—with what the American historian John Primus has called "a keenness unsurpassed in Christian history"[30]—realized that acts of corporate worship and the various disciplines of spirituality demand time. If some time is not set aside for them, they will not get done. In the words of Benjamin Keach, if the Devil "can perswade men that there is no such thing as a *Sacred Rest*, or *any one day* required by Authority from Christ, [he] will soon bring them to observe no day at all; and so all Gospel-worship, Religion, Piety, and the special Day of Worship will soon fall together."[31] And here again is Henry Burton:

> And were it not, that the Lord's day did succeed in place of the Sabbath, the Sabbath day of the Jews being abolished; what time for the means of our sanctification and salvation were left unto us? Were it not for the Lord's day, we should be in a far worse case, than the Jews of old, as being left without opportunity and means of sanctification, all which the Lord's day ministreth unto us; without this, we should have no market day for our spiritual provision and merchandise of our souls, where to buy the pearl of the kingdom, and to supply all our spiritual wants.[32]

Thus, for the Puritans, the fourth commandment became the most important of the moral laws controlling the Christian life.

OBSERVING THE SABBATH

How then was the day to actually be observed? Well, a good place to begin answering this question is by looking at the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 21.7, which J. I. Packer has identified as containing the essence of the Puritan perspective on the observance of the Sabbath.[33] There we read,

> This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.[34]

Obviously, public worship took pride of place. For the Puritans, public worship was the heart and soul of Sunday, and thus the most important aspect of the Christian life. Accordingly Benjamin Keach maintained that during public worship the believer can experience "the nearest Resemblance of Heaven" and receive the "clearest manifestations of God's Beauty." More of God's "effectual" and "intimate presence" is known in this context of corporate worship than anywhere else. So, with Ps 87:2 ("The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob") cited as proof, the Puritan divine unequivocally declared that "the publick Worship of God ought to be preferred before private," though the latter should certainly not be neglected. In fact, the place where "God is most Glorified" is in the midst of a worshipping congregation.[35]

Then, according to the *Westminster Confession*, there should be "private exercises" of worship. The focus of these exercises is God. What sort of exercises? Well, first of all there was prayer, which John Owen (1616–83), who was rightly described by his contemporaries as the "Calvin of England," described as "the principal means whereby we express our universal dependence on God in

Christ."[36] As the Owen's fellow Congregationalist theologian Thomas Goodwin (1600–80) similarly remarked, "our speaking to God by prayers, and his speaking to us by answers thereunto, is one great part of our walking with God."[37] Other "private exercises" would include family prayer, catechizing, and meditation—all very much lost arts among contemporary evangelicals.

Third, there should be involvement in "duties of necessity and mercy." The Confession here recognizes that there are certain activities that must be carried out, even on the Sabbath—in their context, various farm chores; in ours, work in hospitals, firefighters, the police. The other side of this statement, though, is found earlier in the Confession. There it is emphasized that believers should "observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations." Here, there is a genuine desire to prevent unnecessary work and commerce clogging up the time of the Sabbath and thus robbing the believer of his or her spiritual joys which are brought through corporate worship and worship in the home. The statement regarding work is certainly one that contemporary evangelicals, living in a deeply materialistic culture, can take to heart. But what about the question of "worldly … recreations"?

THE QUESTION OF "WORLDLY … RECREATIONS"

The biblical basis upon which the Puritans felt that they could outlaw "worldly recreations" was Isa 58:13–14:

> If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father" (KJV).

The key term here is the word "pleasures." The Puritan perspective on this point is well expressed by John Gill (1697–1771), the Calvinistic Baptist commentator of the eighteenth century, who, though not strictly a Puritan, was certainly one immersed in the Puritan *mentalité*. In his commentary on Isa 58:13 he states that the believer is to "abstain … from recreations and amusements, which may be lawfully indulged on another day."[38] Thus, we find Benjamin Keach stating that some profane the Lord's Day by "walking in the Fields for their own carnal pleasure and recreation"—something that he describes as "an abominable Evil"—and by "gaming and playing, or sporting."[39]

However, the Hebrew word that underlies the term "pleasure" does not have the connotation that the English word has for this contemporary generation and that it had for the Puritans, namely, delights and pleasure arising from recreation. Rather, the term in Isaiah 58 probably has in view the pleasures arising from commercial gain.[40] The implication is that recreational pursuits are not necessarily incongruent with the keeping of the Sabbath. In fact, since human beings have been created a psychosomatic whole, it is hard to imagine that the rest and refreshment of the Sabbath does not include the body as well as the soul. In this regard, a much better explanation of the meaning of the fourth commandment for Christians is given by the late seventeenth-century Puritan pastor Hercules Collins (d. 1702). Basing his remarks upon the *Heidelberg Catechism*, a Reformed catechism compiled in 1562, he thus answers the question, "What are we taught by the fourth commandment?": "that … [the] Lord's Day…be spent in private and publique Devotion, as hearing the Word diligently, practising the Gospel-Sacraments zealously, and doing Deeds of Charity conscionably, and resting from servil Works, cases of necessity excepted."[41] Collins' remarks, and the *Heidelberg Catechism* which underlies them, shows a greater—and in the opinion of this author, a more commend-

able—restraint than the confession when it comes to regulating the private lives of believers on the Sabbath.[42]

This critique aside, much can be learned from the Puritan spirituality of the Sabbath. As Keach rightly noted, in the Sabbath "we have a Prize for our Souls put into our hands, and may injoy God's Presence.... This is the Queen of Days ... which God hath crowned with Blessings; on which day the Spirit most gloriously descended, and the dew of the same Spirit still falls upon our Souls."[43]

A CONCLUDING WORD FROM THE PURITANS

With Keach's quote cited above we are back to one of the most perennial of all topics in Puritan piety, namely, the insistence that the Spirit's presence and work are utterly vital for true spirituality. And the Puritans would urge contemporary Christians, along with seeking to practice the disciplines of the Christian life discussed in this article, to, as John Bunyan once so aptly put it, "Pray for the Spirit, that is, for more of [him], though God hath endued them with him already."[44]

ENDNOTES

[1]Irvonwy Morgan, *Puritan Spirituality* (London: Epworth, 1973), 53–65, esp. 60; Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans. An Anthology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1987), xi–xiv; J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 37–38.

[2]Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "The Holy Spirit," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1980): 61. See also the detailed discussion by Garth B. Wilson, "Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Reformed Tradition: A Critical Overview," in *The Holy Spirit: Renewing and Empowering Presence* (ed. George Vandervele; Winfield, British Columbia: Wood Lake, 1989), 57–62.

[3]Benjamin B. Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God" in *Calvin and Augustine* (ed. Samuel G. Craig; repr., Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 107. See also "John Calvin: The Man and His Work" and "John Calvin the Theologian," in *Calvin and Augustine*, 21, 487.

[4]Benjamin B. Warfield, "Introductory Note" to Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (1900 ed.; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), xxxv, xxviii.

[5]"Tyndale, William," *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th ed.; New York: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1911), 27: 499. Normally, this author follows the standard advice given to college freshmen regarding scholarly research: never cite from encyclopedias in academic papers. But the eleventh edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica* is rightly famous for the depth of its scholarship.

[6]In Henry Walter, ed., *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures by William Tyndale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1848), 399.

[7]David Daniell, *William Tyndale. A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University, 1994), 3.

[8]Richard Dale Land, "Doctrinal Controversies of English Particular Baptists (1644–1691) as Illustrated by the Career and Writings of Thomas Collier" (D.Phil. Thesis, Regent's Park College, Oxford University, 1979), 205.

[9]Cited in Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 33. For a discussion of Fisher's approach to Scripture, see Dean Freiday, *The Bible: Its Criticism, Interpretation and Use in 16th and 17th Century England* (Pittsburgh: Catholic and Quaker Studies, 1979), 97–102.

[10]Cited in ibid., 34.

[11]J. W. Frost, "Penington, Isaac (the Younger)" in *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century* (ed. Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller; Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester, 1984), 3:23.

[12]*Letters of Isaac Penington* (2nd ed.; repr., London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1829), 202–3. For access to these letters I am indebted to Heinz G. Dschankilic of Cambridge, Ontario.

[13]See also the remarks by Land, "Doctrinal Controversies," 205–11.

[14]Cited in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947), 32.

[15]Benjamin Keach, *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture-Metaphors* (London: Enoch Prosser, 1681), 2:312.

[16]*Second London Confession* 1.5 in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (rev. ed.; Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1969), 250.

[17]Cited in Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1823), 3:300.

[18]Cited John H. Primus, *Holy Time, Moderate Puritanism and the Sabbath* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1989), 170.

[19]This description of the pulpit is that of Michael J. Walker, *Baptists at the Table: The Theology of the Lord's Supper amongst English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, Oxfordshire: Baptist Historical Society, 1992), 7. While Walker's description is of the Baptist pulpit in the nineteenth century, it is also true of Puritan preaching.

[20]Cited in Primus, *Holy Time*, 174.

[21]*The Fountain Opened* in *Works of Richard Sibbes* (ed. Alexander B. Grosart; 1862–4 ed.; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 2001), 5:509.

[22]Cited in Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism* (2nd ed.; Haywards Heath, Sussex: Carey, 1979), 35.

[23]S. L. Copson, *Association Life of the Particular Baptists of Northern England 1699–1732* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1991), 89, 95. Italics added.

[24]D. Mervyn Himbury, *British Baptists: A Short History* (London: The Carey Kingsgate, 1962), 141.

[25]One critic of this tradition of Puritan architecture in the early nineteenth century could describe their faith as "the religion of barns" (John Greene, *Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.* [London: Frederick Westley/A. H. Davis, 1834], 25).

[26]Bryan W. Ball, *Seventh-day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 110.

[27]Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 235.

[28]Cited in Primus, *Holy Time*, 177.

[29]Cited in ibid., 178.

[30]Ibid., 179.

[31]Benjamin Keach, *The Jewish Sabbath Abrogated* (London, 1700), 269.

[32]Cited in Primus, *Holy Time*, 179–80.

[33]Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 238.

[34]*The Confession of Faith of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster* (Glasgow: Free Presbyetrian, 1978), 18.

[35]Benjamin Keach, *The Glory of a True Church, and its Discipline display'd* (London, 1697), 63–68, *passim*.

[36]John Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews. Part V* in *The Works of John Owen* (ed. William H. Goold; 1854–85 ed.; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 1991), 18:362.

[37]Thomas Goodwin, *The Return of Prayers* in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D.* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861), 3:362.

[38]John Gill, *Exposition of the Old Testament* (1810 ed.; repr., Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989), 5:344.

[39]Keach, *Jewish Sabbath Abrogated*, 277.

[40]Nigel Westhead, "Evangelicals and Sabbath Keeping in the 1990s," *Evangel* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 58.

[41]Hercules Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism* (London, 1680), 55-56.

[42]Westhead, "Evangelicals and Sabbath Keeping," 58.

[43]Keach, *Jewish Sabbath Abrogated*, 279.

[44]John Bunyan, *I will pray with the Spirit* in *John Bunyan: The Doctrine of the Law and Grace unfolded and I will pray with the Spirit* (ed. Richard L. Greaves; Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 271.

More than Metaphors: Jonathan Edwards and the Beauty of Nature

Stephen J. Nichols

God is not negligent of the world he made.
– Jonathan Edwards

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"'Tis Evident," Edwards writes in Miscellany 1304 during his tenure at Stockbridge, "That God is not negligent of the world that he has made. He has made it for his use and, therefore, doubtless he uses it, which implies that he takes care of it and orders it and governs it, that it may be directed to the ends for which he has made it."[1] It is equally evident that Edwards, following the lead of his God, also was not negligent of the world that God made. Doubtless, Edwards used the world God made.

Jonathan Edwards also took care of it. Edwards also ordered it and governed it—in the way that a vice-regent could, that is. Finally, Edwards did all of this in the direction for which this world was created, the glory of the Creator-Redeemer, the glory of the Triune God.

This article explores Edwards's use of the beauty of nature in a variety of his writings from sermons to the "Miscellanies." While Edwards's ultimate, or as he would put it, "chief," use of nature was the glory of the triune God, his "subordinate ends" are multiplex. These subordinate ends of Edwards's use of nature squarely place him in a theological context that views the world as God-given and as revelational. Creation, or nature, is as Calvin put it, "the theater of God's glory." This emphasis in the Reformed tradition especially served Edwards well as he sought to give expression to the glory of God in his ministry at Northampton and at Stockbridge.

Looking at nature in Edwards's writings and locating Edwards in the Reformed tradition on general or natural revelation, however, are the "subordinate ends" of this paper. The chief end of the paper is to bring the trajectory of Edwards's thought forward to those who are looking for a theological rationale for ecological engagement and for an "aesthetic apologetic"—for

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those who think that beauty is a compelling argument for the presence of God. These seem to be two trendy topics, environmental or ecological engagement and a revival of aesthetics. And, as is usually the case with trendy topics, we can be sometimes governed and at the least influenced by more cultural concerns than theological ones. We can be driven to talk about good things, like creation care and beauty, by bad motives and bad thinking. Such is the case in the topics of ecology and aesthetics.

As a corrective to these culture-driven influences we can find help by escaping our present horizon and listening to the wisdom of voices from the past. One such voice full of wisdom on these issues is Jonathan Edwards. The task of appropriating historical figures for contemporary discussions, however, is rather tricky. Indeed, Jonathan Edwards is "Exhibit A" of misuses and abuses. But, for those convinced that the past has something meaningful to say to the present, such risky undertakings may be warranted.

Jonathan Edwards means a lot of things to a lot of people. He is revivalist. He is the uncompromising harbinger of sin and hell and gloom and doom. He is smart—so he gives us evangelicals all hope that we can have our faith and academic credentials too. He is a model pastor, theologian, thinker, and even a model husband and father. And he is also a model for thinking theologically and apologetically about nature and beauty—at precisely the time when we need such thinking.

Edwards on nature and beauty also makes for a meaningful lesson for pastors. Congregants live in the world. How do they exegete it? Sermons can be helpful models for teaching congregants to exegete, on their own, Scripture. A solid pulpit ministry, over time, models healthy and sound hermeneutics, not only instructing through the words of the sermon itself, but also instructing by communicating and modeling a hermeneutic of the text. We also believe, however, that God's world is revelational.

Just as congregants "live in the word" and are in need of a sound hermeneutic, so, too, they live in the world and so, too, they are in need of a sound hermeneutic. Sermons and the pulpit ministry could also over time model a healthy and sound hermeneutic of the world, of general revelation.

Jonathan Edwards can help here, too. We see Edwards as a model first by glimpsing at his use of nature. Secondly, we look at Edwards's understanding of both the creation mandate and the beauty and clarity of general revelation. Finally, we look to Edwards for his contribution to the current discussions of nature, or as we frame it today, environmental and ecological concerns. We'll also explore Edwards's "aesthetic apologetic," his use of beauty as an argument for God.

EDWARDS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: NATURE IN EDWARDS'S THOUGHT AND WRITINGS

A most intriguing place to look for nature in Edwards's writings concerns those writings from the Stockbridge era, spanning from January 1751 until January 1758. This is his time after Northampton and before his departure to Princeton for his (all-too-brief) stint as president. Rachel Wheeler has figured that Edwards preached approximately 226 times during his tenure at Stockbridge.[2] More important than her statistic is her argument. Prior to Wheeler, and also Marsden's biography which gives due attention to Edwards's Stockbridge years, friends of Edwards neglected to see his sermons and ministry at Stockbridge as substantial and worthwhile. He was, the interpretation ran, too busy with his major treatises. I distinctly recall hearing a paper read at a scholarly conference on Edwards at Stockbridge in which his seven years there were referred to as a sabbatical.

Rachel Wheeler challenges that view by looking at the original sermons Edwards preached for Stockbridge, the ones he composed especially for his congregation, and the ways in which he reworked the Northampton sermon batch. We could add that Edwards not only took his sermonizing seriously, he also took his interaction with the Stockbridge Indians on other matters quite seriously too. What ties these together—his sermonizing and his pastoral if not civil action on behalf of his congregants—is, curiously enough, nature. Edwards floods his sermons with

nature allusions and references.

This is quite understandable, given the world of his congregants, and on one level not all that remarkable. We wouldn't marvel at sermons from a New York City pastor that make frequent references to the subway or skyscrapers or corporate world. We would take those references as they come to us, reflective of the interior world of that community. But I still think we need to see the ways in which Edwards appropriated nature as remarkable. These nature references are, for Edwards, more than metaphors as they reflect both an ontology and an ethic. In his Types Notebook, Edwards plays the role as his own defense attorney:

> I expect by very ridicule and contempt to be called a man of very fruitful brain and copious fancy, but they are welcome to it—I am not ashamed to own that I believe that the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas, and the divine constitution and history of the holy scriptures, be full of divine things as language is of words.[3]

This Divine Being, who so permeates the universe, is, Edwards informs us, "distinguished from all other beings and exalted above 'em chiefly by his divine beauty." This beauty is known in and through the world, and the world is, in an ontological sense, the communication of God's being."[4] Edwards doesn't merely employ nature to help one see God. In Edwards's scheme of things God is communicated in that which is seen.

The connection of this ontological sense of Edwards to his ethics may be seen in the argument he runs through the *Two Treatises*. He posits the ontology in *The End for which God Created the World*, then he constructs his ethic in *The Nature of True Virtue*, the first and second respective treatises.[5] In this light, the references to nature are not merely there for illustration's sake.

An easy glance through the Stockbridge sermons reveals the profusion of nature references. Speaking of God's attributes, Edwards declares that "God's goodness is like a river that overflows all of its bounds." On Ps 1:3, he says similarly, "As the waters of a river run easily and freely so [does] the love of Christ." Preaching on John 15, he speaks of Christ as the fountain, like a spring, of all spiritual life and nourishment. In a sermon to the Mohawks at Stockbridge, Edwards urges, "We invite you to come and enjoy the light of the Word of God, which is ten thousand times better than [the] light of the sun."[6]

As might be expected, he would appeal to the heat of intense fires when speaking of hell, on one occasion even saying that the devil might "roast you in the fire that will burn forever and ever."[7] As Edwards progressed in his ministry at Stockbridge, the harangues on sin and judgment tended to give way to extolling the glories of grace and salvation. Darkness waned, in other words, and light waxed. To put the matter even more directly, the congregation now knew they were thirsty. Edwards had told them as much and they had been convicted of it as much. Then he spoke to them of the living waters that would quench their thirst and meet and satisfy their need.

Wheeler contends that Edwards's "preaching at Stockbridge displays a decisive move away from metaphysical reasoning and towards a reliance on metaphor, images, and narrative." Wheeler goes as far as to say that metaphors "dominate" the Stockbridge sermons.[8] Indeed, his sermons drew largely from the gospels and especially the parables, a genre replete with metaphors and imagery drawn from nature and from an agrarian economy and culture.

Fishermen, sowers of seed in the fields, and tenders of vineyards are the main characters in these parables, providing Edwards with plenty of fodder to illustrate vividly the doctrines he desperately wanted his Stockbridge congregants to know. His sermons from John followed the apostle's suit in using light and darkness as an extended conceit to illustrate righteousness and unrighteousness.

In addition to the Stockbridge sermons, we also need to consider Edwards's Stockbridge "'Miscellanies." The "Miscellanies" written at this time overflow with nature references. "God is not negligent of the world he made," Edwards declares in "Miscellany 1304." This miscellany reflects Edwards's conversation

with the Deists on the one hand and his work with the Stockbridge Indians on the other: "'Tis evident that, as God has made man an intelligent creature, capable of knowing his creator and discerning God's aims in creation." Edwards tells us exactly what we can discern as the Miscellany continues, namely God's moral government. It will take revelation, by which Edwards means scripture, to move one from a knowledge of God as Creator to knowledge of God as Savior, but Edwards begins with what all have been given: creation.

As many, such as Douglas Sweeney, Gerald McDermott, Michael McClymond, and Kenneth Minkema, have pointed out, Edwards is intensely reading in the deists at that moment, as reflected in the predominant subject matter of the Miscellanies from this time period. Edwards is not only working within the bounds of their writings, or within the bounds of whatever he can find on world religions in his quest to tease out the notion of the *prisca theological* (ancient theology), he's also working with the material he sees as he looks out his second floor study window: the environment. This setting shapes his world.

This setting also gives Edwards words, words replete with richly textured analogies. As Edwards works with these words, crafting and shaping them and bringing them to life, he reflects the creative act itself. In his book on aesthetics David Bentley Hart sounds as if he could be speaking of Jonathan Edwards when he writes, "Analogy is the art of discovering rhetorical consonances of one thing with another, a metaphorical joining of separate sequences of meaning, and thus 'corresponds' to the infinite rhetoric of God; it is to discover in the implication of every created thing with every other the way in which all things are images and gifts of an eternal glory." Hart then adds, "To speak more truly, more beautifully of God is to participate with ever greater pertinacity in the plentitude of God's utterances of himself in his word."[9]

Aesthetic speech, beautiful words, of this aesthetic reality, beauty itself, is a divine semiology. Nature, being God's accommodated language of himself, is indeed "the music of the spheres," as the hymn writer put it. And to this music, to this speech, or to this language as it were, Edwards was well attuned.

Edwards's aesthetic language led to an ethic, to action, for in addition to this eminent place of nature and the environment in his writings, Edwards's activities on behalf of the Stockbridge Indians extended to the environment in which they lived. This music of the spheres could also be driven deeply into the soil under the feet of the Mohicans. To put the matter directly, Edwards talked the talk and walked the walk when it came to nature and what would be labeled today as environmental concerns.

The work of historians Shirley Dunn and Lion Miles has drawn attention to the ways in which the colonials both subtly and overtly moved the Native Americans out of their way through successive bids for their land. Forced out, these Native Americans kept moving west. This is true of the Stockbridge Indians. After they had no more land in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, they first settled in New York at a place they dubbed "New Stockbridge." Again, after successive bids for their land, they removed again, settling eventually in Wisconsin. Along the way, they lost their native tongue and much of their native identity.

Lion Miles's work in particular, however, sheds much light on Edwards's role during all of this. Prior to 1750, the English parceled out all of the land, largely apart from any involvement of the natives themselves. By 1750, the Stockbridge Mohicans informed the "Settling Committee" of the Massachusetts General Assembly that the originally agreed upon amount of acreage to be settled by the colonials had doubled in a period of just ten years. By 1776, that originally agreed upon amount of land for the English had ballooned to more than double. In fact, by 1776, the only land the Stockbridge Mohicans still owned consisted of little more than the area around their burial ground.

Without any land of their own, the Mohicans went to New York. Miles refers to the years of 1759 to the mid 1770s as "the great land grab." The years from 1739, the date of Stockbridge's charter, until 1750 were also years of land grabbing. The silence of Miles regarding the intervening years, 1751 to 1758, which correspond directly to Edwards's tenure, reveals the lack of such a land grab under Edwards's watch. Edwards knew the meaning of the land to the Stock-

bridge Indians.[10]

Edwards's references to nature in these Stockbridge sermons and miscellanies, as well as his actions on behalf of his congregation, stem from his embedded appreciation for nature and nature's God. This appreciation goes back to Edwards's first writings. The world is so illustrative of God because God has designed it that way.

Douglas Sweeney expresses Edwards's understanding this way: "Because for Edwards God creates the world ex nihilo, 'out of nothing,' or out of nothing (Edwards would say) but God's own Trinitarian life, all that is reflects that life (from one degree to another)."[11] There is a harmony between the light of nature and the light of Scripture, and a harmony between the God in his being and the world God made. One of Edwards's extended miscellaneous works, "Images of Divine Things" (from 1728), speaks of "the great and remarkable analogy in God's works," an analogy that is "apparent."[12]

The perpetual brightness of the sun's rays, everflowing rivers, thunder clouds, sea billows, easily bent young twigs, growing grass, "the spiders taking of the fly into his snare," and—let's not forget—the "beauteous rainbow" all make observable in the visible world that which is invisible. This "fitness" factors heavily in Edwards's theologizing and philosophizing, which is at the root of his sermonizing.

Just as many interpreters of Edwards have argued for the thematic straight lines that shoot through his miscellanies on to his sermons and on to his treatises, so Edwards's employ of nature is no exception. Edwards's appreciation of nature as revelatory goes back even further than his initial "Miscellany entries." It pulses through the Reformed tradition of which he was a part.

EDWARDS AND GENERAL REVELATION IN THE REFORMED TRADITION: TAKING NATURE SERIOUSLY

Much could be said about the various figures in the Reformed tradition and their influence on Edwards; we will simply focus on Calvin and his understanding of nature as the theater of God's glory. Calvin's commentaries, especially on the Psalms, and his sermons on Job are fruitful places to examine. Reflecting on Psalm 135, Calvin notes, "The whole world is a theatre for the display of the divine goodness, wisdom, justice, and power." He adds, developing the conceit, "but the church is the orchestra." Edwards, and I'll keep the metaphor alive, was in concert with his predecessor.

Nature is revelatory, but not revelatory enough for redemption for Calvin, for Edwards, and for the Reformed tradition. But it is still revelatory. Calvin's commentary on Psalm 8 bears this out. Here he can't speak well or highly enough of the goodness of God, revealed solely through nature and available universally to all. And in his sermon on Job 39:22-35, Calvin has this to say, "If a small portion of God's works [in nature] ought to ravish us and amaze us, what ought all his works do when we come to the full numbering of them?"

Calvin is overwhelmed at the threshold of nature, of creation, in its revelation of the goodness of God. He even frames his appreciation in ways that will sound similar to later expressions by Edwards. On Ps 104:5, Calvin observes, "The stability of the earth proclaims the glory of God, for how does it hold its place unmoved when it hangs in the midst of the air and is supported only by water? ... Even in this contrivance the wonderful power of God shines forth.[13]

While it is true that Calvin said all these things, it is also important to add that Calvin ultimately viewed nature as "precarious," constantly in danger of teetering into chaos—all of which underscores his doctrine of providence, unless you want to follow the route of some interpreters, that is. In the words of Richard Mouw, these interpretations of Calvin's view of the world stem from his own personal fears of chaos. In a Freudian-looking projection model, Calvin was a fearful, close to neurotic, person, who in turn saw the world as barreling downward into oblivion.[14]

In response to these (mis)interpretations, Richard Mouw, in a rather tongue-in-cheek fashion, quips, "If so the Reformer's neuroses have resulted in some fairly healthy theology."[15] Calvin's understanding of nature as veering near chaos has indeed produced some

healthy theology. Such theology could also produce, and arguably has produced, some rather healthy action as well. The notion of impending chaos called Calvin not to abandonment or neglect, but to renewal and engagement. To put the matter differently, the creation mandate isn't abrogated by the fall; instead, it's rather intensified by the fall. Our obligation to subdue the earth is intensified by the problems brought about by the fall.

C. S. Lewis brings some reinforcement to Calvin's understanding of nature's attenuated state, because of the fall, and our consequent obligation to work to set it aright. The Christian, Lewis contends, "thinks God made the world." But the Christian "also thinks that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that God insists, and insists loudly, on our putting them right again."[16]

There are significant implications to this nuanced view of nature and beauty. A naïve view fails to connect with people, fails to match up with their sense of reality. Life is not always pretty flowers and rainbows. Consequently, we should avoid a theology of nature and beauty that has no place for the fall. But we should equally avoid a view that has no place for beauty, for the goodness of creation.

This multiplex and complex world, "the theater of God's glory," calls for a response. Calvin wrote, in reflecting on Psalm 113, of the "criminal apathy" of disregarding the displays of God's glory in the natural order. To cure us of our negligence and apathy, perhaps we should hear those words from the Psalm:

> Praise the Lord!
> Praise, O servants of the Lord,
> praise the name of the Lord!
>
> Blessed be the name of the Lord
> from this time forth and forevermore!
> From the rising of the sun to its setting,
> the name of the Lord is to be praised!
>
> The Lord is high above all nations,
> and his glory above the heavens!
> Who is like the Lord our God,
> who is seated on high,
> who looks far down
> on the heavens and the earth?
>
> He raises the poor from the dust
> and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
> to make them sit with princes,
> with the princes of his people.
> He gives the barren woman a home,
> making her the joyous mother of children.
>
> Praise the Lord!

Interpreters of Edwards tend to look to the platonic and neoplatonic influences on Edwards on the score of his aesthetics, view of nature, and even his typology. These streams indeed influenced Edwards. But interpreters, if they wish to get Edwards right, must also look to the influences from the Reformed tradition, especially looking at the influence of Calvin. By doing so, the clear biblical and theological contours of Edwards's thought come through clearly.

Terrence Erdt, for instance, shows the influence of Calvin's *sensus suavitatis* (sense of sweetness) on Edwards's development and expression of the new sense, whereas many interpreters simply look to Locke and Newton as Edwards's source for the New Sense.

Calvin writes in *The Institutes* that regenerating faith "cannot happen without our truly feeling its sweetness and experiencing it ourselves." Calvin further calls the *sensus suavitatis* a "taste of divine quality," bringing to mind Edwards's insistence on relishing the knowledge of God. Terms we once thought the sole propriety of Edwards, Erdt subtly argues, were borrowed from Calvin.[17] Calvin looked at nature theologically, as *revelation*. What is true for Calvin on this point is equally true for Edwards.

It is important to pause here for a moment. As mentioned above, the roots of Edwards's aesthetics are often traced back to the platonic tradition, giving a distinctly philosophical flavor to Edwards's aesthetics and his take on nature. But if we trace the roots of Edwards's aesthetics to Calvin and to Calvin's robust

theology of general revelation the result is a distinctly theological and biblical flavor to Edwards's thoughts on nature and creation care. Edwards is a theologian first and foremost, in other words. And a theological aesthetics and view of nature is patently different from a philosophical view (as in the Platonic approach, for example) and is patently different from a cultural one (as in a postmodern approach or a "Western" approach). The theological approach is always the higher ground over the philosophical or cultural.

EDWARDS AND NATURE FOR CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICALS: THE ENVIRONMENT AND BEAUTY IN APOLOGETICS, PREACHING, AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

In bringing Edwards and his thought on these matters forward to our times, it seems helpful to tease out two strands. The first concerns an aesthetic apologetics, and the second concerns creation care.

Edwards and "Aesthetic Apologetics": What's Beauty Got To Do with It?

The more popular schools of contemporary evangelical apologetics tend to emphasize rational arguments and historical evidences, from the popular writings and campus debates of the likes of Josh McDowell and Ravi Zacharias to the more academically oriented members of the Society of Christian Philosophers or of the Evangelical Philosophical Society, with their respective journals, *Faith and Philosophy* and *Philosophia Christi*. Proponents of this perspective have long found an ally in Edwards, given his philosophical prowess in *Freedom of the Will* and his forays into rational arguments. What is not as appropriated is Edwards's (or for that matter Calvin's) argument from beauty.

From the beginning, or at least from the time he was twenty-two, beauty factored significantly for Edwards. The reason even the miserable among us cling to life, he mused, is "because they cannot bear to lose sight of the beauty of the world."[18] The beauty of the world led Edwards to put forth what could be termed the "pleasure argument." One should consider Christianity, Edwards develops the line of the argument, because of the sheer pleasure it brings—and not in the world to come, but in this world.[19]

The beauty of the world even leads spiders to smile. As the words of the "Spider Letter," again from his early years, resound, God as Creator "hath not only provided for all the necessities, but also for the pleasure and recreation of all sorts of creatures, even the insects."[20] The role of beauty in Edwards's thought has been significantly developed by Roland Delattre, Clyde Holbrook, and Robert Jenson. It is something that evangelicals would do well to pursue.

Consider, by way of just one example, the words of Roland Delattre. He offers a fairly comprehensive, yet concisely stated summary of Edwards's aesthetic apologetics when he writes, "It is out of God's own beauty that creation proceeds; it is by his beauty that creation is ordered; it is according to his beauty that God governs the world, both natural and moral; it is by beauty that God redeems." Delattre concludes, "Beauty provides the model for Edwards's understanding of the structure and dynamics of the restored and redeemed life of God's people as a community of love and justice."[21]

One should realize in the pursuit of nature and beauty as an apologetic, though, the complexity of Edwards's employ of nature. It's not just the prettiness of nature that Edwards appeals to. Thunder storms and out of control seas and intensely hot fires also come into play. This reminds one of Melville's *Moby Dick*. In chapter sixty-six, "The Shark Massacre," the whalers have harpooned some great white sharks. Melville narrates what happens from there:

> Killed and hoisted on deck for the sake of his skin, one of these sharks almost took poor Queequeg's hand off, when he tried to shut down the dead lid of his murderous jaw. "Queequeg no care what god made him shark," said the savage, agonizingly lifting his hand up and down; "wedder Fejee god or Nantucket god; but de god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin."

Melville was saying something to those who only see God in the rainbow and in the flower. Edwards too had enough room for the revelatory nature of the dark side. As mentioned earlier, Edwards's view of nature is multiplex and complex.

Beauty, despite the complicated nature of aesthetic discussions, is compelling. Edwards employed such compelling moments revealed in nature in his sermons at Stockbridge, and in doing so proves a valuable model for contemporary apologetics, infatuated as it is with rational arguments. Nature declares the glory and the goodness of God. Nature also displays God's beauty, and beauty in turn displays desire. This is not the baser type of desire that Edwards or even a figure like C. S. Lewis referred to, the type of desire that holds one captive with the promise of satisfaction. But the type of desire that Edwards and Lewis speak of is a desire that truly satisfies. Taste and see, writes the Psalmist, that the Lord is good. Honey, Edwards reminds us by way of the writer of Proverbs, "is sweet." Such beauty, evoking desire, is compelling.[22]

The African American spiritual has "Over my head, I hear music in the air," answered by the refrain, "There must be a God somewhere." As a riff on the traditional spiritual, I would venture, "I see beauty in the air," answered by "There is a God somewhere." In fact, we see beauty everywhere. And we only see it because there is a God somewhere.

Beyond concerns for evangelicals to recapture aesthetics, there is also a sense in which the broader horizons of contemporary culture have also lost their aesthetic way. We have become a culture obsessed with efficiency, obsessed with utility. We have become a culture that has settled for baser forms of entertainment or amusement at the expense of art.[23]

Beauty needs to be restored, returned to the conversation, and Edwards provides ample resources to draw upon. In his ethic, Edwards could speak of an ethic for the regenerate, what he termed "true virtue," and an ethic for the unregenerate, what he termed "common morality." In the words of Paul Ramsey, for Edwards this common morality was no small thing, but instead "a rather splendid thing." The same may be said for Edwards's aesthetic. There is in his thought a "common beauty," a beauty known through nature and through common grace, a beauty that can be known by the regenerate in and through the new community of the church and by the unregenerate in and through culture and the community of humanity. And this common beauty is a rather splendid thing.[24]

Edwards and Creation Care: Environmentalists Aren't Always Wrong

Edwards on nature and the environment also has much to say to evangelicals looking to engage the environment and ecology, especially those looking for a biblically and theologically-minded engagement.

Evangelical environmentalism, though, will look different than the environmentalism of others, precisely because in the evangelical frame of things this world is God's world. In that vein, I suggest evangelicals begin thinking theologically about the environment, perhaps calling such thinking an "ecotheology." Figures from the past, like Edwards and Calvin, would very well help us in such a task.

An ecotheology begins with understanding nature as divine semiology, nature as a grammar and language of theology. An ecotheology also demands having a broader view of the Christian task that includes the cultural mandate, stemming from Gen 1:26-28. Perhaps as residue from a fundamentalist past, or perhaps stemming from the tendency to isolate oneself from culture as the way to fulfill the command of Christ in John 17:14-15, evangelicals can at times construe their task rather narrowly.

The cultural mandate points us in a different direction, seeing broad parameters to the church's task. Harkening back to Calvin and to Edwards for that matter, we are reminded that the fall, that sin's curse and its cosmic extent, do not mean the abandonment or neglect of the cultural mandate. Instead, the curse demands our obedience, however difficult and attenuated such obedience may be, to the cultural mandate.

An ecotheology also entails an ethic of cultivation over and against the ethic of "consumption" that so drives much of Western culture. As stewards of the creation we should be concerned with cultivating

natural resources. We should also be concerned with cultivating human relationships as opposed to viewing interactions with people as mere business transactions. This entails the cultivation of our own humanity, pursuing an economics, a politics, and even an educational philosophy that fosters human identity and dignity, not one that reduces human identity and ultimately human life to its economic productivity.

Consider what automated tellers, automated checkouts, online commerce, online education, and even online church says about our cultural drive to suppress (or even to abandon) the need for each other, the need to relate *in the flesh*.

In addition to Edwards as a helpful interlocutor on these points, the work of John Cavanaugh comes to mind. He reminds us that consumption ethics leads to a "commodity form of life," which ultimately creates human beings of "empty interiors," human beings who have lost a sense of self, identity, and dignity. An ethic of cultivation leads to "personal forms of life," where human beings aren't reduced to consumers.[25] The implications here go deep and wide, impacting the areas of business, government, education, and, especially, the church.

Finally, Edwards has one more element to consider for an ecotheology, that of *appreciation*. For Edwards nature and beauty are to be appreciated, to be savored, to be enjoyed. Appreciation means value, and ultimately that which one values will work itself out in an ethic, in behaviors and actions. Edwards reminds us to merely appreciate beauty.

As just one case in point, consider his nearly rapturous nature writing from his "Personal Narrative." Edwards's conversion, which this text recalls, occurs as Edwards, according to his memory, "walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation." Once converted, he now has a new outlook on nature, not to mention an intense appreciation of it. He casts this as a new way of seeing, exclaiming, "The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be a, as it were, a clam, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything." He then applies this new way of seeing to everything: "In the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and in all nature."[26]

Such experiences of nature were in no way limited to his time of conversion. For exercise, Edwards took to horseback riding (and chopping wood) throughout the Connecticut River Valley and later, as he went to Stockbridge, in the Housatonic River Valley. All the while, he "fix[ed] his mind" on nature in deep appreciation. George Marsden describes his riding habits, "In the afternoons after dinner he would ride two or three miles to a secluded place where he would walk for a while." Then Marsden explains why: "He had great love of natural beauty and enjoyed the blue mountains that graced the horizon of the river valley, and he loved the views he could gain by climbing the surrounding hills." And when he climbed those hills, he looked in appreciative wonder.[27]

"The work of creation," Edwards writes in a "Miscellany" from the Stockbridge era, "is spoken of as one of the great wonders done by him who is God of gods and Lord of lords."[28] Creation is a work that makes an argument for God's power, goodness, and peculiar glory. God not only created the world, he also preserves and governs it. Further, the "Miscellany" argues that creation is the theater in which God sets the drama of redemption—all of which gives Edwards cause for thanksgiving and for contemplation.

In short, Edwards finds much in nature worthy of his attention. Further, Edwards viewed his appreciation of the theater of creation as an act of worship. Appreciating nature, for Edwards, becomes an act of obedience and service to God. Such appreciation ultimately becomes foundational to an ecotheology. And such appreciation ultimately works itself out in the way we live.

The Reformed tradition to which Edwards belonged has long given significance to nature as the theater of God's glory. Nature facilitates the communication of the gospel; nature reveals God as creator, a necessary first step leading to the revelation and knowledge of God as redeemer. The beauty of nature is compelling, this line of argument runs. In the mix of responding to people like Richard Dawkins or the fervor over Intelligent Design, evangelical apologetics tends to be overrun with rational arguments, losing sight of beauty.

To be sure, Edwards knew the value of rational arguments, but he also knew the value of beauty. And, while Edwards held the creation to be subordinate and even to be overrun with sin, he still saw the beauty in this world to be worthwhile, something worth living for and something worth working in, and, when it came to the Stockbridge Indians, something worth fighting for. Edwards, in other words, advocated both an aesthetic apologetics and a theology of and for creation care.

CONCLUSION

References to nature permeate Edwards's writings. Such references, not surprisingly, abound in the Stockbridge sermons, written as Edwards imbibed the ethos of the plain nestled along the bend in the Housatonic River and set against the backdrop of the Berkshire Mountains. These frequent references to nature were more than metaphors. Borrowing from Clyde Holbrook's essay on Edwards and nature, nature provided the frame through which Edwards saw (sensed), understood, and relished (via the new sense) God.[29] The mountains, the valleys, and the river all provide the visible and visceral materials.

The beauty of nature leads us to relish God himself and God's revelation of himself in nature. The beauty of nature is compelling, offering persuasive testimony of God's presence and goodness. And in the end, the beauty of nature obligates us. While sitting at his desk at Stockbridge, Edwards once wrote, "God is not negligent of the world that he has made." Edwards, recognizing himself to be God's creature bearing God's own image, was not negligent of the world God made. Neither should be we.

ENDNOTES

[1]Jonathan Edwards, "Miscellany 1304," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 23: The "Miscellanies" 1153-1560* (ed. Douglas A. Sweeney; New Haven: Yale University, 2004), 255.

[2]Rachel M. Wheeler, *Living upon Hope: Mahicans and Missionaries, 1730-1760* (Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 1999), 162.

[3]Jonathan Edwards, "Types" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 11: Typological Writings* (ed. Wallace E. Anderson and Mason I. Lowance, Jr., with David Watters; New Haven: Yale University, 1993), 152.

[4]Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 2: The Religious Affections* (ed. John E. Smith; New Haven: Yale University, 1959), 298.

[5]Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 8: The Ethical Writings* (ed. Paul Ramsey; New Haven: Yale University, 1989). The *Two Treatises* was originally published posthumously in 1765.

[6]Edwards, MS sermon on Exodus 34:6-7 (January 1753), Beinecke Library, Yale University; Edwards, MS sermon on Psalm 1:3 (August 1751), Beinecke Library, Yale University; Edwards, MS sermon on John 15:5 (n.d.), Beinecke Library, Yale University; *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*, 109.

[7]Edwards, MS sermon on Luke 19:10 (June 1751), Beinecke Library, Yale University. The date of this sermon is important. As Edwards progressed in his preaching at Stockbridge, he had less to say about sin and hell and more to say about grace and heaven.

[8]Wheeler, *Living upon Hope*, 166-67.

[9]David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 307.

[10]Shirley Dunn, *The Mohican World, 1680-1750* and *The Mohicans and Their Land, 1609-1730* (Fleischman's, NY: Purple Mountain, 1994); Lion G. Miles, "The Red Man Dispossessed: The Williams Family and the Alienation of Indian Land in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1736-1818," *The New England Quarterly* 68 (1994): 46-76.

[11]Douglas A. Sweeney, "Editor's Introduction," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 23: "The Miscellanies,"* 32.

[12]Jonathan Edwards, "Images of Divine Things," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 11: Typological Writings*, 53.

[13]John Calvin, *Commentary upon the Book of Psalms*, Psalm 135:10, Psalm 8, and Psalm 104:5, *ad loc.*; Calvin, *Sermons on Job*, Job 39:22-35, *ad loc.*

[14]See the chapter on "Calvin's Anxiety" in William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University, 1988) 32-48.

[15]Richard Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 47.

[16]C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 45.

[17]Terrence Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards, Art, and the Sense of the Heart* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1980), 11, 32; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2 vols.; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; ed., John T. McNeill; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.2.15. See Calvin's whole discussion in book 3, chapter 2.

[18]Jonathan Edwards, "Beauty of the World," *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (ed. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema; New Haven: Yale University, 1995), 15.

[19]See Jonathan Edwards's sermon, "The Pleasantness of Religion," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Volume 14: Sermons and Discourses, 1723-1729* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 97-115; see also Stephen J. Nichols, *Heaven on Earth: Capturing Jonathan Edwards's Vision of Living in Between* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 48-60.

[20]Jonathan Edwards, "Spider Letter," *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, 5.

[21]Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University, 1968), 162.

[22]Jonathan Edwards, "The Pleasantness of Religion," *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* (ed. Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney; New Haven: Yale University, 1999), 13-25. A fruitful line of investigation to add to Edwards's potential contribution here might very well involve teasing out the connections and line of influence of the Eastern Orthodox tradition on beauty on Edwards's thought and expression.

[23]See *It Was Good: Making Art for the Glory of God* (ed. Ned Bustard; Baltimore: Square Halo, 2007) and *Objects of Grace: Conversations on Creativity and Faith* (ed. James Romaine; Baltimore: Square Halo, 2002).

[24]Paul Ramsey, "Editor's Introduction," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 8: The Ethical Writings*, 44.

[25]John Cavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society: The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 3-19.

[26]Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 16: Letters and Personal Writings* (ed. George S. Claghorn; New Haven: Yale University, 1998) 793-94.

[27]George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University, 2003) 135.

[28]Jonathan Edwards, "Miscellany 1358," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 23: "The Miscellanies,"* 611-13.

[29]Clyde Holbrook, *Jonathan Edwards, The Valley and Nature: An Interpretive Essay* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1987), 124.

John Owen's Argument for Definite Atonement in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ:* A Summary and Evaluation[1]

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For whom did God the Father intend that Jesus die? What did his death actually accomplish or secure for those people? Did God have a single intent for all those for whom Jesus died? Could God fail to accomplish his intent? Three major soteriological systems answer these questions differently.

(1) Calvinism argues that God intended for Jesus to die effectually for the sins of only the elect.[2] His death accomplished and secured the salvation of the elect alone, and God applies that accomplishment to the elect when they repent and believe at conversion. This view is usually called limited atonement, definite atonement, or particular redemption.

(2) Arminianism argues that God intended for Jesus to die for the sins of all humans without exception. His death was a universal provision that made it possible for anyone to be saved. The benefits of Jesus' atonement are applied to anyone contingent on a person's repentance and faith at conversion. This view is usually called unlimited atonement or general atonement.[3]

(3) Amyraldism (or Amyraldianism) argues that God's intention is twofold: (1) according to God's general will, he intended for Jesus to accomplish (in the sense of procure or obtain) the salvation of all humans without exception, and (2) according to God's effectual will, he intended for Jesus to die effectually for the sins of only the elect. The former is a universal, infinite provision,

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and the latter is a particular, definite, limited application, which the elect experience at conversion. This view, which maintains general atonement, is also called hypothetical universalism, post-redemptionism, ante-applicationism, and four-point Calvinism.[4]

Enter John Owen (1616–1683). Both J. I. Packer and John Piper have made astounding claims about John Owen and his famous book *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (henceforth, *DDDC*).[5] In 1959, Banner of Truth reprinted *DDDC* with an introduction by J. I. Packer.[6] Packer's moving introduction, now a classic that has been reprinted separately, includes this remarkable paragraph in praise of *DDDC:*

> It is safe to say that no comparable exposition of the work of redemption as planned and executed by the Triune Jehovah has ever been done since Owen published his. None has been needed. Discussing this work, Andrew Thomson notes how Owen "makes you feel when he has reached the end of his subject, that he has also exhausted it." That is demonstrably the case here. His interpretation of the texts is sure; his power of theological construction is superb; nothing that needs discussing is omitted, and (so far as the writer can discover) no arguments for or against his position have been used since his day which he has not himself noted and dealt with. One searches his book in vain for the leaps and flights of logic by which Reformed theologians are supposed to establish their positions; all that one finds is solid, painstaking exegesis and a careful following through of biblical ways of thinking. Owen's work is a constructive, broad-based biblical analysis of the heart of the gospel, and must be taken seriously as such. It may not be written off as a piece of special pleading for a traditional shibboleth, for nobody has a right to dismiss the doctrine of the limitedness, or particularity, of atonement as a monstrosity of Calvinistic logic until he has refuted Owen's proof that it is part of the uniform biblical presentation of redemption, clearly taught in plain text after plain text. And nobody has done that yet.[7]

Similarly, John Piper calls Owen's *DDDC* "a difficult but compelling book" that is

> probably his most famous and most influential book. It was published in 1647 when Owen was thirty-one years old. It is the fullest and probably the most persuasive book ever written on the doctrine sometimes called "limited atonement," or better called "definite atonement" or "particular redemption." . . . *The Death of Death* is a great and powerful book—it kept me up for many evenings several decades ago as I was trying to decide what I really believed about the third point of Calvinism (limited atonement).[8]

Both Packer and Piper claim that Owen's *DDDC* is the finest defense of definite atonement,[9] and Packer boldly asserts that one cannot disprove the doctrine of definite atonement without disproving Owen's *DDDC*.[10] One of the most popular books on Calvinism calls *DDDC* "the most thorough defense of the doctrine of limited atonement ever written."[11] Robert L. Reymond declares of Owen's *DDDC*, "No Arminian has ever answered his argument."[12] Assertions like these provoked me to read and evaluate Owen's *DDDC* 360 years after he first penned it. Owen is a theological giant,[13] and *DDDC* is one of his greatest theological legacies.[14] This essay summarizes and evaluates Owen's argument in *DDDC*.

1. A SUMMARY OF OWEN'S *THE DEATH OF DEATH IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST*

DDDC defends definite atonement based on the atonement's teleological nature. Owen's thesis is that the Trinity planned, accomplished, and applied the atonement for the same humans, namely, the elect. That is, the Trinity did not plan and accomplish the atonement for all humans without exception and then apply the atonement to an exclusive subset of that group, namely, the

elect or those who would believe.[15]

Owen's preface (149–56) mentions that he worked on *DDDC* for more than seven years (149), from age twenty-four to thirty-one. Advocates of "the general ransom" usually hold out five "flourishing pretences" for their view (152–54): it

> (1) exalts God's glory by highlighting his "*goodwill and kindnesses*" and "free grace"
> (2) magnifies "the worth and value" of Christ's satisfaction by extending it "to all"
> (3) is supported "by many texts of Scripture"
> (4) displays God's "love and free grace"
> (5) comforts those who have personal "doubts and perplexities" about Christ's death

Owen strongly disagrees, and he designed *DDDC* "to be purely *polemical*" (421). *DDDC* divides into four major sections or "books," and what follows briefly traces Owen's argument.[16] The headings are somewhat reductionistic since the whole book argues for definite atonement by refuting and responding to the objections of general atonement. Arguments that overlap in various sections of this essay reflect overlap in *DDDC*. Except for the footnotes, the following summary of *DDDC* is presented from Owen's point of view.

1.1. Books 1–2: Arguments for Definite Atonement

Books 1 (157–200) and 2 (200–36) argue that the Trinity planned and executed the atonement as a means to effect exactly the end that they intended, namely, to save certain people.

1.1.1. The Ends and Means of the Atonement: Teleological Distinctions

At the heart of the debate about the extent of the atonement is the distinction between the ends and the means. The "end" of something is what an agent intends to accomplish in it and by it (160). It is a carefully designed goal. The "means" is what an agent uses or does to accomplish an end (160). The logical and chronological order is fourfold:

> (1) desiring an end,
> (2) designing the means to that end,
> (3) employing those means, and then
> (4) accomplishing that end (160–61).

For example, David's son Absalom

> (1) desired to be king,
> (2) planned to revolt against his father,
> (3) revolted, and then
> (4) set himself up as king (160).

Unlike any other persons, God always accomplishes exactly what he designs; he flawlessly uses his planned means precisely to accomplish his desired ends (162).

The ends or goals of the atonement involve both what (1) the Father "intended *in* it" and (2) "was effectually fulfilled and accomplished *by* it" (156). First, the Father intended or purposed to save certain sinners from their sins (157–58). Second, the atonement accomplished or effected eternal redemption, namely, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, adoption, and glorification (158–59). General atonement necessarily results in one of two options: either (1) "God and Christ failed" to accomplish what they intended or (2) all humans will be saved (i.e., universalism) (159).

The means of the atonement involves Jesus' death, the culmination of his perfect obedience in life. There are two basic types of means: some are inherently good, and others are not inherently good but serve merely to accomplish the desired end (162). For example, studying as a means to achieve knowledge is inherently "the most noble employment of the soul," but "cutting off a leg or arm" as a means to stay alive, drinking "a bitter potion" as a means to be healthy, or throwing a ship's goods overboard as a means "to prevent shipwreck" fit the latter category (162–63). Jesus' death fits the latter category (180).

1.1.2. The Agents of the Atonement: The Trinity

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each Agents involved in planning and accomplishing

the end for which the atonement was the means. First, the Father is the atonement's "chief author" (163). Although "instrumental causes" in Jesus' death included Satan and ill-willed humans, God himself predestined the means of Jesus' death (Acts 4:28), and Jesus willingly gave up his life, which no one could take from him (163). The Father's role involves "two peculiar acts": sending and punishing his Son (163). First, the Father sends his Son to die (163–71). This is why Scripture sometimes calls the Father "our Saviour" (164). Second, the Father places "the punishment of sins" on the Son, whose atonement serves as a penal substitution (171–74). This raises a "dilemma" for Universalists:

> God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, either [1] all the sins of all men, or [2] all the sins of some men, or [3] some sins of all men. If the last, some sins of all men, then have all men some sins to answer for, and so shall no man be saved.... If the second, that is it which we affirm, that Christ in their stead and room suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the world. If the first, why, then, are not all freed from the punishment of all their sins? You will say, "Because of their unbelief; they will not believe." But this unbelief, is it a sin or not? If not, why should they be punished for it? If it be, then Christ underwent the punishment due to it, or not. If so, then why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he died from partaking of the fruit of his death? If he did not, then did he not die for all their sins. Let them choose which part they will (173–74; cf. 234).

Second, the Son voluntarily and willingly participates in his Father's plan, which involves incarnation, sacrificial offering ("oblation"), and intercession (174–77). Third, the Holy Spirit participated in Jesus' incarnation, sacrificial offering, and resurrection (178–79).

1.1.3. The Means of the Atonement: Jesus' Mediatorial Sacrificial Offering and Intercession

As the mediatorial High Priest, Jesus is the means through which the Father accomplishes his intended end, and Jesus' mediatorial role involves two facets: sacrificial offering and intercession.[17] The objects of Jesus' sacrificial offering and intercession are coextensive, that is, the people for whom Jesus intercedes are the same people for whom he died (181–201, 208). "That he died for *all* and intercedeth only for *some* will scarcely be squared" with Rom 8:32–34 (182). The very nature of the office of priest requires both offering and intercession (183–84). By dividing Jesus' mediatorial role so that his objects are not coextensive, universal atonement undercuts a Christian's comfort and assurance (186). In Jesus' incarnation, sacrificial offering, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, there is "not one word of this general mediation for all. Nay, if you will hear himself, he denies in plain terms to mediate for all" (190) in John 17:9, where "Christ refused to pray for the world, in opposition to his elect" (177). Further, 1 Tim 2:5 does not claim that Christ Jesus is the Mediator for all humans without exception (190).

1.1.4. The Divine Design of the Atonement: Tying Up Teleological "Loose Ends"

"The main thing" on which the controversy turns and "the greatest weight" of the issue is tied to the atonement's design (200). One alternative to definite atonement is blasphemous: the Trinity lacks "wisdom, power, perfection, and sufficiency," and Jesus' sacrificial offering and intercession are unable to accomplish the desired end (201, 224). The atonement's "*supreme* and ultimate" end is "the glory of God," who is himself "the chiefest good" (201). An "*intermediate* and subservient" end "is the *bringing of us unto God*," in which salvation is the end and faith is the means (202). Scripture's support of definite atonement falls under three categories.

(1) The Father and Son share the same intended end (i.e., "counsel, purpose, mind, intention, and will") for the atonement (208–11). They effected exactly what they intended to accomplish for the same people, and "Christ died for all and only those" for whom the intended accomplishments are applied (211).

(2) The atonement actually accomplished and effected (or procured or produced) redemption, forgiveness of sins, deliverance, reconciliation, sanctification, and eternal life (211–14). If Jesus' death actually accomplishes this, "then he died only for those" who experience these accomplishments; but since all humans without exception do not experience these accomplishments, "they cannot be said to be the proper object of the death of Christ.... The inference is plain from Scripture and experience, and the whole argument (if I mistake not) solid" (214).

(3) The humans for whom Jesus died are the same humans for whom the Father and Son planned, accomplished, and applied the atonement. Scripture describes this group as "many," "sons," "sheep," "children of God," "brethren," "elect," "his people," and his "church" (214–15).

Thomas More makes a series of objectionable charges in this regard (215–21). More claims, "there are more ends of the death of Christ" than that of definite atonement. More is incorrect because the only end is "the fruit of his ransom and propitiation, directly intended, and not by accident.... The end of any work [by God] is the same with the fruit, effect, or product of it" (216). More claims that Scripture does not claim that Jesus died "only for many, or only for his sheep." An "undeniable consequence," however, of statements that Jesus died for his sheep or church is that he did not die for those who are not his sheep or church. "If this be adding to the word of God (being only an exposition and unfolding of his mind therein), who ever spake from the word of God and was guiltless?" (217). Furthermore, in the very passage where Jesus says that he "gave his life for his sheep" (John 10:11, 15, 26), he adds that "some are not of his sheep," and if this is "not equivalent to his sheep only, I know not what is" (217).

1.1.5. The Accomplishment and Application of the Atonement: Distinct but Inseparable Facets

Accomplishment ("impetration") refers to what Jesus' death and intercession obtain, meritoriously purchase, acquire, or secure; application, which occurs "upon our believing" (223), refers to the actual enjoyment of what was accomplished (222–36). Arminians and Amyraldians distinguish two groups of people with reference to the atonement's accomplishment and application: (1) the accomplishment is for all humans without exception, and (2) the application is for only those who believe (222–23). This distinction is fundamentally flawed because it misrepresents the teleological nature of the atonement (223–26).

The atonement's accomplishment and application are distinct but inseparable (232–36). If a man intends to redeem a captive, he pays the price (i.e., accomplishment) and the captive is freed (i.e., application) (223). Although faith is the conditional means by which the atonement is applied to certain people, faith itself "is actually purchased and procured for us" unconditionally (223–24, 227); Jesus died in order that God's elect would believe (235). The atonement is not like medicine in a cabinet that is generally available to be applied to whomever uses it; this analogy fails because the medicine was not prepared only for specific people (232–33).[18] The same people for whom Jesus accomplished redemption are the same people to whom he applies it (224–26, 232). Jesus' atonement is the means for saving certain people, exactly like the Trinity designed. If some people are the objects of the atonement's accomplishment but not its application, then Christ fails to reach the designed end (224) and is "but a half mediator" (235). Scripture "perpetually" joins accomplishment and application (225–26), and the doctrine of reprobation does not allow their separation (227). General atonement is contrary

to common sense, reason, and Scripture (233). The atonement's value, worth, or dignity, however, is "infinite and immeasurable; fit for the accomplishing of any end and the procuring of any good, for all and everyone for whom it was intended, had they been millions of men more than ever were created" (231).[19]

1.2. Book 3: Arguments against General Atonement

Book 3 (236–94) presents sixteen arguments against general atonement. The thesis common to these arguments is that (1) the atonement by design actually saves certain people and not others and (2) the dilemma of general atonement is either universalism or the Trinity's failure to effect exactly the end that they intended.

Argument 1 (236–38): Jesus' death ratified "the new covenant of grace," which is for certain people, not all without exception.

Argument 2 (238–40): Faith comes by hearing the good news about Christ (Rom 10:17), and it is unbecoming of God's wisdom to send Jesus to die for all humans without exception while knowing that millions of humans never hear this good news (238). "What wise man would pay a ransom for the delivery of those captives which he is sure shall never come to the knowledge of any such payment made, and so never be the better for it?" (238). Or what physician with "a medicine that will cure all diseases" would intend to heal all without exception, but then tell relatively few people about his medicine (239)?

Argument 3 (240–43): To say that Jesus *conditionally* died for all humans without exception is "extreme madness" (241) and "a vain fruitless flourish" (242). It is as if a person promises "dead men great rewards upon condition they live again of themselves" (242). If God designed Jesus' death to save all humans without exception on the condition of their faith; if Jesus' death does not secure that faith; and, if humans are inherently unable to exercise faith, then how is it that any are saved (243)? Jesus' death purchased salvation, which includes the gift of faith (243).

Argument 4 (243–45): If in "the eternal purpose of God," humans divide into two exclusive categories, and if Scripture says that Jesus died for one of these categories and nowhere that he died for the other category, then he did not die for all humans without exception (243). The conclusion is valid because the conditions are true. Scripture distinguishes between two exclusive categories of humans: those God loves and those God hates; those he knows and those he does not know; those appointed to life and those fitted for destruction; elect and reprobate; sheep and goats (243–44). Scripture explicitly says that Jesus died for the former category and nowhere that he died for the other (see argument 5). Some, however, may affirm that Jesus died for the former category, but object that Scripture never says that he died "only" for the former category. This argument, however,

> is of no value; for is it not, without any forced interpretation, in common sense, and according to the usual course of speaking, to distinguish men into two such opposite conditions as elect and reprobate, sheep and goats, and then to affirm that he died for his elect, [is it not] equivalent to this, he died for his elect only? Is not the sense as clearly restrained as if that restrictive term ["only"] had been added? Or is that term always added in the Scripture in every indefinite assertion, which yet must of necessity be limited and restrained as if it were expressly added? as where our Saviour saith, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," John xiv. 6;—he doth not say that he *only* is so, and yet of necessity it must be so understood. As also in that, Col. i. 19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;"—he doth not express the limitation "only," and yet it were no less than blasphemy to suppose a possibility of extending the affirmation to any other. So that this exception, notwithstanding this argument, is, as far as I can see, unanswerable (245).

Argument 5 (45–46): "The Scripture nowhere saith Christ died *for all men*, much less for all and every man" (245). Since Scripture clearly and repeatedly says that Jesus died for a specific group, "it must be clearly proved that where *all* is mentioned, it cannot be taken for all believers, all his elect, his whole church, all the children God gave him, some of all sorts" to conclude it teaches general atonement (246). The burden of proof here is on advocates of general atonement.

Argument 6 (246–49): Jesus died as a substitute for only certain people; he died in their place. He freed them from God's wrath, and he satisfied God's justice for *only their* sins—not the sins of all humans without exception (246–47). First, general atonement requires a double payment for sins: both Jesus' death and eternal punishment (247). Second, Jesus did not intend to satisfy God's justice for those "innumerable souls" who were already "in hell" (247). "Did God send his Son, did Christ come to die, for Cain and Pharaoh, damned so many ages before his suffering?" (248). Third,

> If Christ died in the stead of all men, and made satisfaction for their sins, then he did it for all their sins, or only for some of their sins. If for some only, who then can be saved? If for all, why then are all not saved? They say it is because of their unbelief; they will not believe, and therefore are not saved. That unbelief, is it a sin, or is it not? If it be not, how can it be a cause of damnation? If it be, Christ died for it, or he did not. If he did not, then he died not for all the sins of all men. If he did, why is this an obstacle to their salvation? Is there any new shift to be invented for this? or must we be contented with the old, namely, because they do not believe? that is, Christ did not die for their unbelief, or rather, did not by his death remove their unbelief, because they would not believe, or because they would not themselves remove their unbelief; or he died for their unbelief conditionally, that they were not unbelievers. These do not seem to me to be sober assertions (249).

Argument 7 (249): Jesus died for certain people as their Mediator, a role that includes his sacrificial offering and intercession. Jesus is not a Mediator for all humans without exception, so general atonement "is a dishonest subterfuge that hath no ground in Scripture, and would make our Saviour a half mediator in respect of some, which is an unsavoury expression" (249).

Argument 8 (249–53): Jesus died for the sanctification of certain people. If Jesus' blood "doth *wash*, *purge*, *cleanse*, and *sanctify* them for whom it was shed, or for whom he was a sacrifice, then certainly he died, shed his blood, or was a sacrifice only for them that in the event are *washed*, *purged*, *cleansed*, and *sanctified*," and it "is most apparent" that this is not the case for all humans without exception (250). Jesus' death effects sanctification, which is "the certain fruit and effect of the death of Christ in all them for whom he died; but all and every one are not partakers of this sanctification, this purging, cleansing, and working of holiness: therefore, Christ died not for all and every one" (252).

Argument 9 (253–57): Jesus' death obtained and merited the blessings that he freely gives to certain people, and this includes faith, which is an "absolute indispensable necessity unto salvation" (253).

> If the fruit and effect procured and wrought by the death of Christ absolutely, not depending on any condition in man to be fulfilled, be not common to all, then did not Christ die for all; but the supposal is true, as is evident in the grace of faith, which being procured by the death of Christ, to be absolutely bestowed on them for whom he died, is not common to all: therefore, our Saviour did not die for all (257).

Argument 10 (257–58): Jesus' death was the antitype of which Israel's deliverance from Egypt was the type. There is "just proportion ... between

the types and the things typified," so "only the elect of God, his church and chosen ones, are redeemed by Jesus Christ" (258).

Arguments 11–15 (258–90): General atonement is incompatible with the very nature of "[11] *redemption*, [12] *reconciliation*, [13] *satisfaction*, [14] *merit*, [15] *dying for us*" (259). General atonement is "too long for the bed, and must be cropped at the head or heels" (259). If Jesus accomplished these five benefits for all humans without exception, then universalism is true; universalism, however, is not true, nor is general atonement (261, 264, 287–90). Jesus did not die to satisfy God's justice as a penal substitution (280–85) for reprobates like Cain and Pharaoh, who experience eternal punishment for their sins; otherwise, there would be a double-payment for their sins (273, 289–90). "A second payment of a debt once paid, or a requiring of it, is not answerable to the justice of God demonstrated in setting forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins, Rom. iii. 25" (273). "How comes it that God never gives a discharge to innumerable souls, though their debts be paid?" (273). Jesus' "priestly office" included bearing "the punishment due to our sins, to make atonement with God, by undergoing his wrath, and reconciling him to sinners upon the satisfaction made to his justice: therefore cannot these things be denied without damnable error" (282). "The elect do, in their several generations, lie under all the wrath of God in respect of merit and procurement, though not in respect of actual endurance—in respect of guilt, not present punishment" (285). "To affirm Christ to die for all men is the readiest way to prove that he died for no man, in the sense Christians have hitherto believed, and to hurry poor souls into the bottom of Socinian blasphemies" (290).[20]

Argument 16 (290–94): "Some particular places of Scripture, clearly and distinctly in themselves" affirm definite atonement.

(1) Gen 3:15. "Christ died for no more than God promised unto him that he should die for. But God did not promise to him all," but only the woman's seed, namely, the elect (290–91).

(2) Matt 7:23; John 10:14–17; 1 Cor 6:20. On the last day, Jesus will profess to some that he never knew them, yet he laid down his life specifically for those he knew as his own.

(3) Matt 11:25–26. Jesus did not die for those from whom the Father hid the good news according to his good pleasure.

(4) John 10:11, 15–16, 26–29. Not all humans are Jesus' sheep, that is, the elect. Jesus as a Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep—not "for goats, and wolves, and dogs." Thus, "plainly he excludes all other" and means exactly the same thing "as if he had said he did it for them only" (292).

(5) Rom 8:32–34. God's sending his son to die for the elect is the pinnacle of his expression of love for them. If Jesus died for all humans without exception, then God demonstrates the very same love for reprobates. However, God freely gives "all things that are good" to those for whom Jesus died, and he certainly does not give such things as "faith, grace, and glory" to reprobates. Thus, "we conclude that Christ died not for all." Christ's resurrection and intercession "for them for whom he died" affords "two invincible arguments." First, Jesus' death has "infallible effects" and "doth infallibly free all them from condemnation for whom he died." Second, there is a connection "between the death and intercession of Jesus Christ," that is, Jesus intercedes for those for whom he died. Heb 7:25 affirms that he completely saves those for whom he intercedes. Thus, "it is undeniably apparent that the death of Christ, with the fruits and benefits thereof, belongeth only to the elect of God" (293).

(6) Eph 1:7. "If his blood was shed for all, then all must have a share in those things that are to be had in his blood," including redemption, which is not experienced by all humans without exception (293–94).

(7) 2 Cor 5:21; Isa 53:5; John 15:13. If Jesus died for all humans without exception, then they would all be "made the righteousness of God in

him" and be saved (294).

(8) John 17:9, 19. Jesus intercedes for the elect and "not for the world" (294).

(9) Eph 5:25. Jesus died for "his church," and "a man's own wife is the only allowed object of his conjugal affections" (294).

1.3. Book 4: Arguments against Objections to Definite Atonement

Book 4 (294–421) refutes exegetical and theological objections to definite atonement.

1.3.1. Exegetical Arguments against Objections to Definite Atonement

Various places in Scripture speak of the atonement with "general and indefinite expressions" (294). Objections to definite atonement invariably appeal to these sorts of texts.

TEN FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING "GENERAL AND INDEFINITE EXPRESSIONS"[21]

(1) Jesus' death has "infinite worth, value, and dignity" and is "sufficient in itself" to save all humans without exception (295). It could save all humans without exception if that were God's desired end (295–96; cf. 420), but there is a difference between its sufficient value and efficient accomplishment and application (296). Proponents of general atonement "exceedingly" undervalue its infinite worth, which is foundational for evangelizing all humans without distinction (296–98). Jesus death is infinitely sufficient for universal evangelism even "if there were a thousand worlds" (297). Since gospel preachers do not know God's secret will, they may "justifiably call upon every man to believe" since "there is enough in the death of Christ to save every one that shall do so" (298).

(2) "Many general expressions in the Scripture" highlight that the new covenant breaks down the dividing-wall between Jews and Gentiles (298–99). Thus, objections to definite atonement based on terms like "*all, all men, all nations, the world, the whole world*, and the like, are all of them exceeding weak and invalid" (299).

(3) "Man's duty and God's purpose" are distinct and have "no connection between them" (299). "The duty of ministers of the gospel" is to evangelize all humans without distinction, "in exhortations, invitations, precepts, threatenings," but ministers should not worry about God's secret eternal purpose, namely, "whom he purposeth to save, and whom he hath sent Christ to die for in particular." Their job is to "command and invite all to repent and believe," but they do not know to whom God will grant repentance and faith (300).

(4) "The Jews were generally infected with this proud opinion" that salvation belonged exclusively to them, but universal language sharply corrects their "erroneous persuasion" (301–02). General expressions "do not hold out a collective universality, but a general distribution into men of all sorts" (302).

(5) Context determines the equivocal meaning of general expressions using "world" or "all"; the mere presence of those words does not *de facto* substantiate general atonement (302–09). Some advocates of general atonement quote texts with these general expressions "as though the victory were surely theirs," but "the words themselves, according to the Scripture use, do not necessarily hold out any collective universality" (303). Such an assumption wreaks havoc of passages like John 1:10; 8:26; 12:19; 1 John 5:19; Rev 13:3; Col 1:6; and Rom 1:8 (306–07, 335).

> It being evident that the words *world, all the world, the whole world*, do, where taken adjunctively for men in the world, usually and almost always denote only some or many men in the world, distinguished into good or bad, believers or unbelievers, elect or reprobate, by what is immediately in the several places affirmed of them, I see no reason in the world why they should be wrested to any other meaning or sense in the places that are in controversy between us and our opponents (307).

The key distinction is that such general terms may indicate (1) "collectively," all "without exception" or (2) "distributively," all without distinction or "all of some sorts" (307). The second sense is ten times more common than the first (307), and to assume the first results in nonsensical interpretations of passages like John 12:32; 6:37 (cf. Rev 5:9); Luke 11:42; Acts 2:17; 10:12; Rom 14:2; 1 Cor 1:5; 1 Tim 2:1–2, 4, 8; Matt 9:35 (308). The use of the OT in the NT substantiates definite atonement because the OT predicts "that *all nations, all flesh, all people, all the ends, families,* or *kindreds of the earth, the world, the whole earth,* the *isles,* shall be converted," but "none doubts but that" this refers only to God's elect. So "why should the same expression used in the Gospel, and many of them aiming directly to declare the fulfilling of the other, be wire-drawn[22] to a large extent, so contrary to the mind of the Holy Ghost?" (309)

(6) Sometimes Scripture describes a group of professing Christians "according to the appearance they have" even though some may be hypocrites (309–10). This is significant for understanding "those places that seem to express a possibility of perishing and eternal destruction to them who are said to be redeemed by the blood of Christ" (310).

(7) Charitable judgments about the genuineness of professing Christians may not be true (310–11).

(8) There is an "*infallible connection*" between "faith and salvation," not between human responsibility to believe and God's alleged intention that all without exception believe (311–12).

(9) The gospel should be preached to all without distinction because "the elect and reprobates" are distributed "throughout the whole world" (313). The number who hear the gospel, however, is coextensive with neither general nor definite atonement because (1) some never even hear the gospel and (2) among those who do hear the gospel, the hearing must be accompanied by faith, which God graciously gives to whom he desires, namely, the very same people for whom Jesus died (314).

(10) Saving faith involves recognizing that sinners cannot save themselves and that only Jesus can save sinners; "resting upon" Jesus "as an all-sufficient Saviour"; and only then rightly inferring that Jesus died particularly for them (314–16).

EXEGESIS OF THREE GROUPS OF DISPUTED TEXTS

Proponents of general atonement cite general terms in three groups of texts to prove that God intended for Jesus to die for all humans without exception and that Jesus' death is ineffective for some for whom he died. The above principles apply especially to these three groups of disputed texts (316–68).[23]

> (1) Texts containing the word "world": John 3:16; 1 John 2:1–2; John 6:51; 2 Cor 5:19; John 1:9, 29; 3:17; 4:42; 1 John 4:14; John 12:46 (319–43)
> (2) Texts containing the word "all": 1 Tim 2:4–6; 2 Pet 3:9; Heb 2:9; 2 Cor 5:14–15; 1 Cor 15:22; Rom 5:18 (343–59)
> (3) Texts allegedly depicting the perishing of those for whom Christ died: Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11; 2 Pet 2:1; Heb 10:29 (359–68)

None of these texts substantiates general atonement. To the contrary, these texts uphold definite atonement without any contradiction. Proponents of general atonement cite John 3:16, for example, but a right understanding of God's love, τὸν κόσμον, and πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων perfectly harmonizes with definite atonement (319–29); as David used Goliath's own sword to sever Goliath's head, so proponents of definite atonement may use John 3:16 to refute general atonement (319). The same is true of the other passages, such as ἱλασμός and ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου in 1 John 2:2 (330–38), οἱ πάντες in 2 Cor 5:14–15 (350–52), ὁ ἀδελφός in Rom 14:15 and 1 Cor 8:11 (360–62), and τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς δεσπότην ἀρνούμενοι in 2 Pet 2:1 (362–64).

REBUTTAL OF THOMAS MORE

Thomas More's *The Universality of God's Free Grace* is easily refuted (368–403).[24] More is guilty of eisegesis, for example, by "turning indefinite propositions into universals" (372).

1.3.2. Theological Arguments against Objections to Definite Atonement

Some final objections by proponents of general atonement are worth refuting (404–21). Definite atonement is not an obstacle to faith (409–11). General atonement does just the opposite of definite atonement: it devalues rather than exalts God's free grace and the merit of Jesus' atonement (411–15; see table 1), and it undermines rather than supports "*gospel consolation*" and assurance (415–21).

2. AN EVALUATION OF OWEN'S *THE DEATH OF DEATH IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST*

What I perceive to be "weaknesses" and "strengths" in Owen's *DDDC* is no doubt significantly influenced by my cultural context, and I submit the following evaluation respectfully and corrigibly. Although the weaknesses are not trivial, the strengths more than compensate for them.

2.1. Weaknesses

2.1.1. Frustratingly Cumbersome Writing Style

Content aside, Owen's writing style is frustratingly cumbersome to the modern reader. Owen employs flowery phrases and elaborate sentence structures that tend to prevent readers from discerning his point as they trip over his verbiage. Although verbosity among writers was not unusual even among poets in Owen's era, Owen

Table 1. Owen's Antitheses: General vs. Definite Atonement[25]

Universalists	Scriptural Redemption
(1) Christ Died for all and every one, elect and reprobate.	(1) Christ died for the elect only.
(2) Most of them for whom Christ died are damned.	(2) All those for whom Christ died are certainly saved.
(3) Christ, by his death, purchased not any saving grace for them for whom he died.	(3) Christ by his death purchased all saving grace for them for whom he died.
(4) Christ took no care for the greatest part of them for whom he died, that ever they should hear one word of his death.	(4) Christ sends the means and reveals the way of life to all them for whom he died.
(5) Christ, in his death, did not ratify nor confirm a covenant of grace with any federates, but only procured by his death that God might, if he would, enter into a new convenant with whom he would, and upon what condition he pleased.	(5) The new covenant of grace was confirmed to all the elect in the blood of Jesus.
(6) Christ might have died, and yet no one be saved.	(6) Christ, by his death, purchased, upon covenant and compact, an assured peculiar people, the pleasure of the Lord prospering to the end of his hand.
(7) Christ had no intention to redeem his church, any more than the wicked seed of the serpent.	(7) Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it.
(8) Christ died not for the infidelity of any.	(8) Christ died for the infidelity of the elect.

seems to excel them all. Even modern readers trying to avoid an unfair anachronistic judgment cannot help but wish that Owen would have followed the classic advice of Strunk and White: "Omit needless words."[26]

2.1.2. Frustratingly Complex Argumentation

Owen's argumentation is frustratingly complex. *DDDC* does not appeal to most English-speaking people today because it addresses a thick, deep, and heavy subject in a dense, complicated, exhausting, repetitive way. It certainly does not read like a compelling novel that one cannot put down. When Owen acknowledges at one point, "Although I fear that in this particular I have already intrenched upon the reader's patience" (221), it is hard to disagree with him, both in that instance and in general throughout the volume.[27]

2.1.3. Overstated Elevation of Definite Atonement's Importance

General atonement deeply offends Owen because it robs God of his glory for planning, accomplishing, and applying a definite atonement. Owen's elevation of the relative importance of definite atonement, however, is overstated. Packer, for instance, describes *DDDC* as "a polemical piece, designed to show, among other things, that the doctrine of universal redemption is unscriptural and destructive to the gospel."[28] "Destructive to the gospel" is strong language that could use qualification,[29] and Owen uses such strong language repeatedly in *DDDC*.[30] I agree with Owen that general atonement is unbiblical, but it is not necessarily heresy.[31] Owen does not call it heresy, but he lacks a single gracious word for it in this regard. I agree with Owen that definite atonement is biblical, but that does not mean that those who hold to general atonement are compromising the gospel. Historic Arminians, Amyraldians, and Calvinists all agree on the fundamentals of the faith, that is, what some would call first-order or first-level doctrines. First-level doctrines are so important that one cannot knowingly deny them and still be a Christian. The extent of the atonement is decidedly *not* such a doctrine.[32] (§3 below elaborates on this by suggesting ways that believers should avoid unhealthy schism over the extent of the atonement.)

2.1.4. Excessively Uncharitable Rhetoric

Owen's anti-Arminian and anti-Amyraldian rhetoric is excessively uncharitable. Perhaps some measure of leniency should be extended to Owen since this type of persuasive speaking was less offensive in his historical context. The application for contemporary theologians, however, is that rhetoric such as *ad hominem* and cutting, unkind, derogatory ridicule has no place in Christian argumentation, especially as a characteristic tendency (cf. 2 Tim 2:24–26). Pragmatically, such rhetoric offends rather than persuades one's opponents.[33]

Consider the following examples.[34] "Free-will" is "corrupted nature's deformed darling, the Pallas or beloved self-conception of darkened minds" (150). General atonement "seems to us blasphemously injurious to the wisdom, power, and perfection of God, as likewise derogatory to the worth and value of the death of Christ" (159). Some people deny that the people for whom Jesus intercedes are the same people for whom he died, and Owen claims to remove their objections "'as a man removeth dung until it be all gone'" (187), exclaiming, "I cannot be persuaded that any man in his right wits would once propose it" (188). Some propose that Jesus is a double Mediator (a general Mediator for all without exception and a special mediator for some), but this is "so barbarous and remote from common sense,—in substance such a wild, unchristian madness, as contempt would far better suit it than a reply" (189). It is an "uncouth distinction" (190). Based on Heb 2:9; 9:26; John 1:29; and 1 John 2:2, some claim that Jesus is a propitiation for all humans without exception, but these words "have no tolerable sense," making the words of Scripture "wrested and corrupted, not only to the countenance of error, but to bear a part in unreasonable expressions" (198).

Thomas More's argument in *Universality of Free Grace*

> serves only to declare with what *copia verborum* the unlearned eloquence of the author is woven withal; for such terrible names imposed on that which we know not well how to gainsay is a strong argument of a weak cause. When the Pharisees were not able to resist the spirit whereby our Saviour spake, they call him "devil and Samaritan." Waters that make a noise are usually but shallow. It is a proverb among the Scythians, that the "dogs which bark most bite least" (215).

More's words "bear no tolerable sense" (216).

> We must be content to view such evasions as these, all whose strength is in incongruous expressions, in incoherent structure, cloudy, windy phrases, all tending to raise such a mighty fog as that the business in hand might not be perceived, being lost in this smoke and vapour, cast out to darken the eyes and amuse the senses of poor seduced souls.... What ... is there to be picked out of this confused heap of words which we have recited? ... What a nothing is that heap of confusion which is opposed to it! (218).

"How blind are they who admire him for a combatant who is skilful only at fencing with his own shadow! and yet with such empty janglings as these, proving what none denies, answering what none objects, is the greatest part of Mr More's book stuffed" (221).

Counter-arguments advanced by adherents of general atonement are "empty clamours" (303), "poison," and "venom" (316) that pervert Scripture and abuse reason (317). Such proponents are "lying in wait to deceive" (316) and "poor pretenders" who "are indeed very children" (317). They are "poor deluded things" who "exceedingly betray their own conceited ignorance, when, with great pomp, they hold out the broken pieces of an old Arminian sophism with acclamations of grace to this *new* discovery (for so they think of all that is new to them)" (311–12; cf. 313; 404). Their argument that Jesus' dying for the "world" means that he died for all humans without exception "is so weak, ridiculous, and sophistically false, that it cannot but be evident to any one" (318). "A weaker argument, I dare say, was never by rational men produced in so weighty a cause" (319).

Thomas More's argument for general atonement from 2 Pet 3:9 "comes not much short of extreme madness and folly" (348). More argues for a parallel between the extent of Adam's sin and Christ's death: "Never, surely, was a rotten conclusion bottomed upon more loose and tottering principles, nor the word of God more boldly corrupted for the maintenance of any error, since the name of Christian was known" (355). More wrongly calls his arguments "reasons" because they are unreasonable (369). "Such logic is fit to maintain such divinity" (370). He deceives himself and others "for want of logic" that "is exceedingly ridiculous" (374). He employs "the whole Pelagian poison of free-will and Popish merit of congruity, with Arminian sufficient grace, in its whole extent and universality" (381). More's total argument is a "heap of words, called arguments, reasons, and proofs" with a "manner of expression" that is "obscure, uncouth, and ofttimes unintelligible," a "way of inference" that is "childish, weak, and ridiculous," and exegesis that is "perverse, violent, mistaken, through ignorance, heedlessness, and corruption of judgment, in direct opposition to the mind and will of God revealed" in Scripture (403).

"What then, I pray, is this your universal free grace? Is it not universally a figment of your own brains? or is it not a new name for that old idol free-will? ... Are not the two great aims of their free grace to mock God and exalt themselves?" (411; cf. 413)

Finally, Owen's label for definite atonement in Table 1 above, "Scriptural Redemption" (as opposed to labeling advocates of general atonement as "Universalists" [414–15]), is a rather biased label! It reminds one of people who piously take the higher ground by referring to themselves

as "Biblicists" rather than Arminians or Calvinists.

2.1.5. Significantly Improvable Theological Method

A governing rule for those evaluating a book is to refrain from faulting an author for not writing the book *they* would have written. At the risk of violating that standard, I would suggest that Owen's theological method is significantly improvable.

The theological disciplines break down into at least five categories: exegesis, biblical theology (BT), historical theology (HT), systematic theology (ST), and practical theology (PT). Shrewd theologians employ a theological hermeneutic that recognizes the complex interrelationships between these disciplines, while recognizing that they build on one another with exegesis as the foundation.[35] *DDDC* employs exegesis and ST almost exclusively with very little BT, HT,[36] or PT. Consequently, Owen's ST conclusions, which are superb, are often based on the assumed meaning of proof-texts rather than proven exegesis.[37] His ST conclusions could be significantly fortified with a more rigorous theological method, particularly by giving more attention to BT.[38] This is not to charge Owen with being an un-shrewd theologian who fails to recognize BT, HT, and PT.[39] Rather, it highlights a methodological area that, if improved, could significantly strengthen his thesis.

2.2. Strengths

2.2.1. Sober and Passionate Preoccupation with Scripture

Foundational to Owen's theological method is his recognition that Scripture is the final authority.[40] Consequently, *DDDC* is soberly and passionately preoccupied with Scripture, text after text after text.

Owen's original work could never be a best-seller in a culture like contemporary America, where Christian bookstores are stocked with psychological self-help books that aim to make money by making individuals feel better about themselves. The first words that drip from Owen's pen in the preface create a mood of sobriety that *DDDC* maintains: "Reader, If thou intendest to go any farther, I would entreat thee to stay here a little. If thou art, as many in this pretending age, *a sign or title gazer*, and comest into books as Cato into the theatre, to go out again,—thou hast had thy entertainment; farewell!" (149).

Piper remarks, "Owen loves the cross and knows what happened there better than anyone I have read."[41] This is the case in *DDDC* as in Owen's other writings. *DDDC* considers what Scripture says about the extent of the atonement and evidences Owen's consuming preoccupation with (i.e., meditation on) Scripture. The result is that *DDDC*, although polemical, has rich devotional value. It is worshipful. Owen stands amazed at the foot of the cross and marvels at how big God is and how small humans are. He exalts God's rich love and wisdom. And he is deeply offended that others would denigrate one bit of God's glory that he deserves for designing the atonement efficiently for particular people.

2.2.2. Appropriate and Commendable Use of Logic

God is not irrational, and he expects believers to be rational when interpreting and applying his revelation.[42] Logic is occasionally necessary for arriving at conclusions that are not explicit in the text such as God's tri-unity or Jesus' two natures united in one person without division. Jesus himself expected the Sadducees to use such logic with reference to the resurrection (Matt 22:31–32). Owen appropriately and commendably uses "sound or restored reason"[43] to "connect the dots" to defend definite atonement exegetically and systematically.[44] *DDDC* "is a masterpiece in the subordinate use of logic in theology, where valid consequences are granted."[45]

2.2.3. Relatively Thorough and Cumulatively Convincing Argument

Although *DDDC* is exhausting to read, it is also

exhaustive; it remains the most thorough defense of definite atonement in print over 360 years after Owen penned it. Owen's repeated piling of argument on top of argument creates a cumulative case that is convincing.[46]

3. APPLICATION: TEN PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO BELIEVERS FOR AVOIDING UNHEALTHY SCHISM OVER THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT

It is an understatement to say that the extent of the atonement can be a controversial issue among Christians. Unfortunately, the doctrine of the extent of the atonement is often inflammatory, and there are many ways to create unhealthy schism over it. Regardless of whether believers hold to general or definite atonement, they can hold to their position in an unhealthy, divisive way. The following practical applications suggest errors that believers should avoid for the sake of unity in Christ's body.

(1) Believers should avoid uncharitably denigrating other positions, including both the proponents and their arguments.[47] Christian conversations and debates should be characterized by respect and graciousness. Intramural arguments among Christians are not merely between fellow human beings created in God's image, but brothers and sisters "for whom Christ died" (Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11).

(2) Believers should avoid setting up and tearing down "straw men," but instead represent the position of others so accurately that adherents of that position are satisfied with the representation. For example, if a Calvinist is disagreeing with Amyraldism, the Calvinist should describe Amyraldism in a way that an Amyraldian would not find objectionable. This requires doing one's homework by carefully reading the best literature by proponents of other views. One of the most common straw men for definite atonement, for example, is that it eliminates the need for evangelism—a charge overwhelmingly rebutted, not only in Owen's *DDDC*, but also historically in the works of other Calvinists such as Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), George Whitefield (1714–1770), William Carey (1761–1834), Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981), and John Piper (1946–).

(3) Believers should avoid viewing other positions as heresy,[48] distinguishing them from the extremes of both universalism and hyper-Calvinism. Universalism affirms that all humans without exception eventually will be saved and denies the existence of eternal punishment.[49] Hyper-Calvinism excessively maximizes God's sovereignty and minimizes human responsibility with the result that there is no need for evangelism.[50] Both are grave errors, but Arminianism, Amyraldism, and Calvinism are guilty of neither.

(4) Believers should avoid insufficiently defining their position in a way that does not meaningfully contrast with other positions. Specifically, they should not define their position with the phrase "sufficient for all, efficient for the elect" unless they carefully define every word in the phrase and show how their view contrasts with other positions. Arminians, Amyraldians, and Calvinists alike have used that elastic phrase to describe their position, resulting in confusion rather than clarity and precision.[51] Although the phrase may defuse tensions in many situations, it blurs distinctions and, therefore, is unhelpful to use for defining a position.

(5) Believers should avoid piously claiming that their view is the result of BT and not ST. All positions involve ST because they use logic to correlate biblical texts in order to answer the question, "What does the whole Bible teach about the extent of the atonement?" The answer to this question reflects tensions in other doctrines (See Table 2).

Table 2. Doctrinal Tensions[52]

Doctrine	Tension	Explanations to Resolve the Tension
God's Tri-Unity	A. There is one God.	Arians (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses) deny A.
	B. Three persons are called God.	Tritheists deny B.
	C. Those three persons are distinct.	Modalists and Sabellians deny C.
Christ's person	A. Christ is fully God.	Ebionites and Arians deny A.
	B. Christ is fully human.	Gnostics/Docetists and Appollinarians deny B.
	C. Christ is one person.	Nestorians deny C.
The problem of evil	A. God is all-good	Some Calvinists (e.g., Gordon Clark) qualify A.
	B. God is all-powerful and all-wise.	Finitists (e.g., Edgar S. Brightman) deny B.
	C. Evil exists.	Pantheists (e.g., Benedict Spinoza) and adherents of Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science deny C.
The extent of the atonement	A. The atonement is universal.	Calvinists qualify A.
	B. The atonement is effectual.	Arminians deny B, and Amyraldians deny or qualify B.
	C. Only some people will be saved.	Universalists deny C.

With reference to the extent of the atonement, like Owen's *DDDC*, I would qualify A (in Table 2) by saying that the atonement is (1) unlimited in its sufficiency, value, and availability and (2) definite in its intention, accomplishment, and application. The adjective "universal" (not "unlimited") in the sense of "all without distinction" genuinely and adequately modifies "intention, accomplishment, and application" in a manner consistent with scriptural usage. Calvinists, Arminians, and Amyraldians all "limit" the atonement: Calvinists limit its extent, and the others limit its efficacy.

The point is that each "system" or approach to the extent of the atonement seeks to resolve apparent tensions in Scripture. From the Amyraldian/Arminian perspective, those who deny an unlimited atonement do not satisfactorily account for A. From the Calvinist perspective, those who deny a definite atonement do not satisfactorily account for B. This is not as simple as saying that definite atonement is ST and that general atonement is BT. Both positions involve ST.

(6) Believers should avoid blowing the extent of the atonement out of proportion. This doctrine is not necessarily[53] at the heart of the gospel, nor is it the primary facet of the atonement that Scripture emphasizes.[54] Arminians, Amyraldians, and Calvinists agree on the atonement's (1) universal availability to all without distinction, (2) definite application to all who repent and believe, and (3) infinite merit or sufficiency to save all humans without exception.[55] Whether one holds to definite or general atonement, it is a mistake to magnify a position's distinguishing features to the neglect of other doctrines that are much more significant and clear in Scripture.

Scripture could be more explicit regarding the extent of the atonement.[56] For example, Scripture distinctly emphasizes the universality of human sinfulness by using language that is more precise and is unequivocally unlimited, extending to all humans without exception.[57] Perhaps the most effective way to communicate this through language is with absolute negatives, which are indisputably clear and unambiguously inclusive. For example, "Absalom has struck down *all* the king's sons, and *not one* of them is left" (2 Sam 13:30 NASB).[58] Absolute negative language clarifies in

order to avoid misunderstanding and emphasizes universality without exception. That is why when God wants to emphasize that every single human without exception is sinful, he expresses it with absolute negatives: "There is *none* righteous, *not even one; ... all* have turned aside, *together they* have become useless; there is *none* who does good, there is *not even one*" (Rom 3:10, 12 NASB).[59] This language is indisputably unambiguous. God could use this type of language with reference to the extent of the atonement, but he does not. God has not stressed an unlimited nature of the extent of the atonement like he has the doctrine of sin. Scripture could say, "Christ died for *x* (e.g., "all humans" or "the whole world"); there is *not one* human for whom Jesus did not die." That would be a strong case for general atonement.

(7) Believers should avoid criticizing evangelistic appeals to unbelievers that say "God loves you"[60] or "Jesus died for you." A Calvinist can tell unbelievers, "Jesus died for you," because unbelievers generally understand the conjunction "for" in that sentence to mean that the benefits of Jesus' death are available if they repent and believe.[61]

(8) Believers should avoid requiring adherence to their view when flexibility is appropriate. For example, a Reformed seminary that adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith as its doctrinal statement is not likely to hire a professor who holds to general atonement, nor is an Arminian seminary likely to hire a professor who holds to definite atonement—and rightly so. There is something healthy, however, about a conservative evangelical seminary that allows flexibility on this issue as long as professors hold their view in a non-schismatic, non-crusading way. The same applies with reference to membership requirements for local churches.

(9) Believers should avoid giving the impression that complete understanding is possible regarding the extent of the atonement. They should play the "mystery" card neither too early nor late, recognizing that the pinnacle of doxology is praising God for being infinitely greater than finite minds can ever comprehend (Rom 11:33–36; cf. Deut 29:29).

(10) Believers should avoid holding their position with sinful pride. The cross of Christ is central to the Christian faith, and those discussing issues inseparably related to the cross are "on holy ground" that should be profoundly humbling. Carl F. H. Henry asked precisely the right question: "How on earth can anyone be arrogant when standing beside the cross?"[62]

CONCLUSION

Owen's *DDDC* is a constructive and polemical defense of definite atonement. Its thesis is that the Trinity planned, accomplished, and applied the atonement for only the elect. Books 1–2 argue for definite atonement; Book 3 argues against general atonement; and Book 4 argues against objections to definite atonement.

Unfortunately, *DDDC* has (1) a frustratingly cumbersome writing style, (2) complex argumentation that is challenging to follow at times, (3) an overstatement of definite atonement's importance, (4) divisive, uncharitable rhetoric, and (5) a theological method that is significantly improvable. Its strengths, however, are more formidable: it is (1) soberly and passionately preoccupied with Scripture, (2) appropriately and commendably logical, and (3) relatively thorough and cumulatively convincing.

Packer is right: Owen addressed the extent of the atonement with unique comprehensiveness, requiring that any who addresses the subject must deal with *DDDC*.[63] But Owen's *DDDC* is not the final word on definite atonement.

ENDNOTES

[1]Special thanks to D. A. Carson, Graham Cole, Phil Gons, and Robert Yarbrough for examining this essay and sharing insightful feedback.

[2]Many Calvinists explain NT passages containing the word "all" or "world" (e.g., 1 John 2:2) by distinguishing between "all humans without distinction" and "all humans without exception." The former phrase, they believe, is often the best contextual explanation

of such passages, which refer to all kinds of humans without distinction to geography, ethnicity, and/or chronology.

[3]This essay uses the adjectives "definite" and "general" as labels for the major atonement positions rather than the misleading adjectives "limited" and "unlimited." Cf. Roger R. Nicole, "The Case for Definite Atonement," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 10 (1967): 200; idem, "Particular Redemption," in *Our Savior God: Man, Christ, and the Atonement: Addresses Presented to the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, 1977–1979* (ed. James Montgomery Boice; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 169; D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 73–74; James Montgomery Boice and Philip Graham Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 113–14.

[4]Three notes of clarification are in order: (1) The three major views presented above are admittedly painted with a broad brush since each view has its own subdivisions with distinctive nuances. (2) Some four-point (or four-and-a-half-point) Calvinists are not Amyraldians because they reject hypothetical universalism. (3) Amyraldism is a subdivision of Calvinism, so Amyraldians are Calvinists. This essay pragmatically distinguishes the Amyraldian view of the atonement as distinct from the Calvinist view as delineated above. Cf. B. B. Warfield's taxonomy of Calvinists in *The Plan of Salvation* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 87–104, 111–12. Warfield asserts that although Amyraldism "is a recognizable form of Calvinism," it "is not therefore necessarily a good form of Calvinism, an acceptable form of Calvinism, or even a tenable form of Calvinism. For one thing, it is a logically inconsistent form of Calvinism and therefore an unstable form of Calvinism.... Post-redemptionism is logically inconsistent Calvinism" (93–94). Amyraldism is "bad Calvinism" (96).

[5]In this essay, citations of *DDDC* are from vol. 10 of *The Works of John Owen* (ed. William H. Goold; 1850–53; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1967), 139–428. (One may locate these citations in the edition that Banner of Truth published separately in 1958 by subtracting 112.) References to page numbers generally occur in the body (in parentheses), not footnotes. All italicized words in direct quotations reproduce the emphasis in the original. Outdated grammar and punctuation appear verbatim as well.

[6]The below citations of Packer's "Introduction" are from "'Saved by His Precious Blood': An Introduction to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*," in Packer's *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 125–48, 344–46. Throughout *A Quest for Godliness*, Packer repeatedly gives tribute to Owen out of thankfulness to God for this gift to the church. See, e.g., 12–13, 81, 191–94.

[7]Packer, "Introduction," 136.

[8]John Piper, *Contending for Our All: Defending Truth and Treasuring Christ in the Lives of Athanasius, John Owen, and J. Gresham Machen* (The Swans Are Not Silent 4; Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 77–78. Piper elaborates, "If you want the best statement on this doctrine [i.e., definite atonement] go to Owen himself, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*" (78 n. 1).

[9]Roger Nicole similarly states, "If you want full argumentation for it [i.e., definite atonement], I cannot recommend anything better than *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* by John Owen" ("Particular Redemption," 169).

[10]Cf. Jack N. Macleod, "John Owen and the Death of Death," in *"Out of Bondage": Papers Read at the 1983 Conference* (London: Westminster Conference, 1984), 70; R. K. McGregor Wright, *No Place for Sovereignty: What's Wrong with Freewill Theism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 153–54.

[11]David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended, and Documented* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004), 131.

[12]Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (2d ed.; Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 1140.

[13]To better understand Owen, his historical context, and his theological framework, see Carl R. Trueman, "Owen, John," in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangeli-*

cals (ed. Timothy Larsen, David W. Bebbington, and Mark A. Noll; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 494–98; idem, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998); idem, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Great Theologians Series; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007); Justin Taylor, www.JohnOwen.org; Dewey D. Wallace, "The Life and Thought of John Owen to 1660: A Study of the Significance of Calvinist Theology in English Puritanism" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1965); Peter Toon, *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen: Pastor, Educator, Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971); Sarah Gibbord Cook, "A Political Biography of a Religious Independent: John Owen, 1616–83" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1972); Sinclair B. Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1987); Richard M. Hawkes, "The Logic of Grace in John Owen, D.D.: An Analysis, Exposition, and Defense of John Owen's Puritan Theology of Grace" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1987); Alan Spence, "John Owen and Trinitarian Agency," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 157–73; Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, see esp. 81–96, 125–48, 191–218; Robert W. Oliver, ed., *John Owen: The Man and His Theology: Papers Read at the Conference of the John Owen Centre for Theological Study, September 2000* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2002); Sebastian Rehnman, *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen* (ed. Richard A. Muller; Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); Piper, "Communing with God in the Things for Which We Contend: How John Owen Killed His Own Sin While Contending for the Truth," in *Contending for Our All*, 77–113; Kelly M. Kapic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), esp. 15–34, 131–32.

[14]For evaluations of Owen's view of the atonement, see Alan C. Clifford, "John Owen (1616–83)," in *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640–1790: An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 2–16; Kenton D. Spratt, "The Cross Saves: John Owen's Case for Limited Atonement and Its Critics" (MCS. thesis, Regent College, 1992); Neil Andrew Chambers, "A Critical Examination of John Owen's Argument for Limited Atonement in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ"* (Th.M. thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 1998); Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, 91–92.

[15]Packer clarifies, "Strictly speaking, the aim of Owen's book is not defensive at all, but constructive. It is a biblical and theological enquiry; its purpose is simply to make clear what Scripture actually teaches about the central subject of the gospel—the achievement of the Saviour" ("Introduction," 134). Trueman agrees that *DDDC* "is not a treatise about the limitation of the atonement as such. Rather, as James Packer observes, it is a piece of positive theological construction primarily aimed at establishing the efficacy of Christ's death for the salvation of the elect. The extent of the atonement, while providing the initial reason for writing, is actually part of a much bigger question, that of whether Christ died simply to make salvation possible or to make it actual. In this context, limitation of the atonement can, on one level, be seen as an inference from other doctrines: if the death of Christ is efficacious for salvation, then those who do not come to enjoy that salvation cannot be numbered among those for whom Christ died" (*Claims of Truth*, 185–86).

[16]Owen subdivides each of the four books into chapters followed by roman numerals, Arabic numbers, and spelled-out numbering ("First," "Second," "Third," etc.). What follows does not reproduce his elaborate logic in exactly this same form but instead attempts to distil and paraphrase his principal arguments. Also, due to space limitations, these paraphrases often do not cite strings of supporting Scripture quotations. For more thorough summaries of large portions of *DDDC*, see Spratt, "Cross Saves," 17–115, 185–234; Chambers, "Critical Examination," 30–110. Cf. Packer's concise summary ("Introduction," 135–36) and analytical outline in Banner of Truth's 1959 edition of *DDDC* (26–31). Packer's analytical outline is available as a PDF at http://www.johnowen.org/media/packer_death_of_death_outline.pdf.

[17]Trueman (*Claims of Truth*, 185–226, 233–40) places this within the broader context of Owen's theology to explain "the basic structures that inform Owen's understanding of Christ's priesthood: doctrinally, the Trinitarian determination of the office of Mediator; biblically and historically, the contextualization of Christ's ministry against the backcloth of Old Testament teaching on priests and priesthood. The obvious inference of this, and one which pervades Owen's work, is that the death of Christ cannot be understood in isolation but must be understood within the framework of mediation which is defined by the covenant of redemption and the threefold office, particularly that part which refers to Christ's priesthood" (196–97).

[18]A better illustration is medicine carefully prescribed by a doctor for a specific individual.

[19]This is what Calvinists who are sympathetic with Owen mean when they say that the atonement is "sufficient for all." Its design is limited to specific persons, but its value is unlimited. Calvinism and Amyraldism disagree with reference to the atonement's design, not its intrinsic value.

[20]See Trueman, "The Nature of Satisfaction" and "The Role of Aristotelian Teleology in Owen's Doctrine of Atonement," chap. 5 and appendix 1 in *Claims of Truth*, 199–226, 233–40.

[21]Owen lists ten principles, but several overlap (2 and 4; 3, 8, and 9).

[22]"Wire-drawn" means "drawn out to a great length or with subtle ingenuity; fine-spun; elaborately subtle, ingenious, or refined" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

[23]This brief survey does not trace Owen's exegetical arguments in detail.

[24]Owen's exhaustive reply, which rebuts ch. 20 of More's work, is not traced in detail here. Though not unimportant, this section of *DDDC* probably has the least contemporary relevance. Packer explains, "More's exposition seems to be of little intrinsic importance; Owen, however, selects it as the fullest statement for the case for universal redemption that had yet appeared in English and uses it unmercifully as a chopping-block. The modern reader, however, will probably find it convenient to skip the sections devoted to refuting More (I:viii, the closing pages of I:iii and IV:vi) on his first passage through Owen's treatise" ("Introduction," 147).

[25]This table reproduces verbatim what appears in *DDDC* (414–15).

[26]William Strunk Jr., *The Elements of Style* (4th ed.; rev. E. B. White; Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 23. They explain, "Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all sentences short, or avoid all detail and treat subjects only in outline, but that every word tell" (23).

[27]Packer concedes that Owen's writing style and argumentation are difficult, particularly in *DDDC*, yet he gamely insists that the reader's challenging, if not tortuous, labor is abundantly rewarding (*Quest for Godliness*, 84, 147, 194).

[28]"Introduction," 125; cf. 126–30, 133–34, 137.

[29]Granted, Packer does not say that it "destroys the gospel." By "destructive," he likely means that the *implications* of universal redemption cannot logically or Scripturally cohere with a substitutionary atonement.

[30]Cf. §2.1.4.

[31]Heresy may be defined in three broad ways: (1) any theological error, that is, teaching that is incorrect to any degree; (2) divisive theological error, that is, teaching that is both incorrect to any degree and especially divisive; or (3) extreme theological error, that is, teaching that denies essential elements of the gospel. The first type of "heresy" is merely inaccurate; the second is both inaccurate and destructive to the body of Christ; the third is both inaccurate and damning. A Christian can hold to the first and even the second, but not to the third. The third definition essentially combines all three definitions because extreme theological error is errant by definition and divisive by nature. Theologians have generally used "heresy" in accordance with the third definition, i.e., when a person deliberately chooses to reject fundamental biblical truth and accept and propagate extreme theological error. In this sense general atonement

is not necessarily heresy. (The word "necessarily" is important because in some cases general atonement is foundational to a heretical, gospel-denying synthesis such as universalism.) Cf. Alan Cairns, "Heresy," *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (3d ed.; Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2002), 207; M. R. W. Farer, "Heresy," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 326; Bruce A. Demarest, "Heresy," *New Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 291–92; Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988; repr., *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998]), 2; D. Christie-Murray, *A History of Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1989), 1.

[32]See Wayne Grudem's thoughtful essay, "Why, When, and for What Should We Draw New Boundaries?" chap. 10 in *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (ed. John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth; Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 339–70. Contrast Craig L. Blomberg, "The New Testament Definition of Heresy (or When Do Jesus and the Apostles Really Get Mad?)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002): 59–72. Note Grudem's interaction with Blomberg (350–51, n. 4–5).

[33]Again, cf. §3 below for suggestions on how believers should avoid unhealthy schism over the extent of the atonement.

[34]Providing this many examples may be a bit over-the-top, but it validates describing Owen's rhetoric as *excessively* uncharitable.

[35]A fine example of this is D. A. Carson's dozens of books and articles. For his explanation of aspects of theological method, see, for example, "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology," in *Scripture and Truth* (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 65–95, 368–75; "The Role of Exegesis in Systematic Theology," in *Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer* (ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 39–76; "Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 17–41; *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); "New Testament Theology," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 796–814; "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 89–104.

[36]To Owen's credit, he does include a three-page appendix to *DDDC* that quotes Polycarp, Ignatius, Clement of Rome, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, Ambrose, Augustine, Prosper, and the council of Valence in favor of definite atonement (422–24).

[37]See for example, Owen's method of proof-texting in *DDDC* 1.1.2 (158–59). Owen's exegesis is generally not the finest available defense of definite atonement. For example, his exegesis of 1 John 2:2 is not entirely convincing (330–38). Cf. D. A. Carson's treatment of 1 John 2:2 in *The Epistles of John* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

[38]A. T. B. McGowan, reflecting on recent developments on the extent of the atonement, concludes, "It seems to me that there is much study still to be undertaken in relation to the extent of the atonement and the decrees of God.... There is scope for considerable work here. In carrying out this work it is important to continue to engage with Arminian scholars, since historically they too are a product of the Calvinist tradition. The reinvigorated Amyraldian position must also be tackled and their arguments must be faced seriously and carefully. Many pamphlets have been written, but few full-scale studies have been undertaken." "The Atonement as Penal Substitution," in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology* (ed. A. T. B. McGowan; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 209. An invaluable contribution to the church today would be a comprehensive monograph

similar to *DDDC*, using contemporary language and incorporating more informed exegesis in combination with BT, ST, HT, and PT. The theological disciplines have each developed significantly since Owen wrote *DDDC* in 1647, and *DDDC*, though thoughtful and invaluable, could be significantly improved by incorporating advances in exegesis (especially Greek grammar and exegetical commentaries), BT, ST, and the developments on the extent of the atonement in HT from Owen's day to the present. An example of a grammatical work worthy of incorporation is J. William Johnston, *The Use of Πας in the New Testament* (ed. D. A. Carson; Studies in Biblical Greek 11; New York: Lang, 2004). Two forthcoming books (both scheduled for 2013) should serve the church well in this regard: David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, eds, *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway) and Andrew David Naselli and Mark A. Snoeberger, eds., *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement: Three Views* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman), with essays and responses by Grant Osborne, Russell Moore, and Carl Trueman.

[39]See Sebastian Rehnman, *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen* (ed. Richard A. Muller; Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

[40]Cf. Stanley N. Gundry, "John Owen on Authority and Scripture," in *Inerrancy and the Church* (ed. John D. Hannah; Chicago: Moody, 1984), 189–221.

[41]In the foreword to John Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation* (ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 13.

[42]Tom Wells notes, "A frequent complaint against Reformed or Calvinistic people goes something like this: 'Your view of the Atonement is not the result of Scripture but of logic. In fact, you are rationalists!' Those are harsh words indeed, but necessary, if true.

"When I hear that I am a rationalist I am reminded of something Carl F. H. Henry said in another connection: 'Let those who want to defend irrationalism do it with whatever weapons they can find!'

"Abandon logic altogether and you must abandon all reasoned discourse. There is no discussion that does not appeal to reason from beginning to end." "For Whom Did Christ Die?" *Reformation and Revival* 5 (1996): 51. Wells's point is valid, but more often than not, the accusation hurled at Calvinists is a bit more nuanced, e.g., "You are rationalistic *and not submitting to Scripture*." These opponents of Calvinism do not reject the use of reason; instead, they accuse Calvinism of using reason *without being sufficiently grounded in exegesis*.

[43]Rehnman, *Divine Discourse*, 114. See chap. 4, "Faith and Reason," for Rehnman's explanation of Owen's view of the proper use of logic in theology (109–28).

[44]This is not an absolute endorsement of all of Owen's exegesis and theology without exception in *DDDC*. On the macro-level, Owen's reasoning is outstanding, but on the micro-level, some of his arguments seem weak or flawed.

[45]Rehnman, *Divine Discourse*, 116. See Paul Helm, "The Logic of Limited Atonement," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 3, no. 2 (1985): 47–54, which responds to the critique of definite atonement by James B. Torrance, who follows John McLeod Campbell. Cf. D. A. Carson, "Logical Fallacies," chap. 3 in *Exegetical Fallacies* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 87–123; Ronald H. Nash, "The Law of Noncontradiction," chap. 8 in *Life's Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 193–207.

[46]I should qualify that I find this to be convincing *at this stage of my theological growth*. I always want to leave the door open to adjusting my understanding if further exegesis and theology convinces me otherwise.

[47]Cf. §2.1.4 above.

[48]Cf. n. 31 above.

[49]Cf. N. T. Wright, "Universalism," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 701–3; D. A. Carson, *Gagging of God*, 515–36; Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

[50]Cf. Curt D. Daniel's 912-page thesis, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983); Peter Toon, "Hyper-Calvinism," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, 324; Iain H. Murray,

Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1995).

[51]For an explanation of the history of this phrase, which originated with Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences*, see W. Robert Godfrey, "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (1975): 133–71, esp. 136, 142, 149, 159, 164–69; Trueman, *Claims of Truth*, 199–206; Raymond A. Blacketer, "Definite Atonement in Historical Perspective," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole* (ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 311.

[52]Other doctrines where there is similar tension include inspiration, prayer, evangelism, and progressive sanctification.

[53]Again, the word "necessarily" is important because either view pushed too far results in heresy. One danger to avoid is so minimizing the doctrine's importance that the extent of the atonement seems trivial.

[54]Wayne Grudem suggests, "Although Reformed people have sometimes made belief in particular redemption a test of doctrinal orthodoxy, it would be healthy to realize that Scripture itself never singles this out as a doctrine of major importance, nor does it once make it the subject of any explicit theological discussion." Grudem advises a "cautious" and "balanced pastoral perspective" that places "almost no emphasis on this question at all" (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 603). Robert W. Yarbrough's concise but detailed treatment of atonement does not even find it necessary to entertain the issue ("Atonement," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* [ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000], 388–93).

[55]Cf. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 597.

[56]When I took a doctoral course on soteriology in spring 2003, my professor respectably defended an Amyraldian view, and I am sympathetic with how he ended our weeks of lively discussion on the atonement's extent: "The fact that God avoids consistent terminology that is equally unambiguous to both sides suggests that we should inform our understanding as fully and biblically as we are able, be dogmatic on unambiguous texts, charitable on ambiguous issues, and glory in a God whose mind cannot be reduced to ink and paper for the satisfaction of the curiosity of the mind of man."

[57]This paragraph reflects a discovery that Phil Gons and I made while we were studying for our doctoral comprehensive exams in July 2005.

[58]Emphasis added. One could find *scores* of examples like this by searching on the words "not one," "not even one," "no one," or "none." Cf. Exod 8:31; 9:6; 10:19; Num 11:19; Josh 10:8; 21:44; 23:14; Matt 24:2; Luke 12:6; John 17:12; 18:9; Acts 4:32; Rom 14:7.

[59]Emphasis added. Cf. Psa 53:3.

[60]See Carson, *Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, 77–78.

[61]Grudem argues, "It really seems to be only nit-picking that creates controversies and useless disputes when Reformed people insist on being such purists in their speech that they object any time someone says that 'Christ died for all people.' There are certainly ways of understanding that sentence that are consistent with the speech of the scriptural authors themselves. Similarly, I do not think we should rush to criticize an evangelist who tells an audience of unbelievers, 'Christ died for your sins,' if it is made clear in the context that it is necessary to trust in Christ before one can receive the benefits of the gospel offer. In that sense the sentence is simply understood to mean 'Christ died to offer you forgiveness for your sins' or 'Christ died to make available forgiveness for your sins.' The important point here is that sinners realize that salvation is available for everyone and that payment of sins is available for everyone" (*Systematic Theology*, 602).

[62]Quoted in D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 58.

[63]Cf. Spratt, "Cross Saves," 14.

John Flavel's Theology of the Holy Spirit

Adam Embry

The people quietly gathered on the shore at midnight, watching as a man waded in the water toward the large rock in the middle of the Kingsbridge estuary. The low water during spring tides provided an unlikely, but necessary, pulpit on the rock for the English minister in exile. At another beach the minister swam away from civil authorities seeking his arrest, but most often he secretly met with his church in the woods. Such scenes were all too familiar for English nonconformists living after the ejection of Puritan ministers from the Church of England in 1662.

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The words from the preacher standing on the rock arrested the hearers' attention. On this particular evening, urgency filled John Flavel's voice, as he pleaded on behalf of the Holy Spirit for professing believers not to grieve the Spirit.

> I plead now on his behalf, who hath so many times helped you to plead for yourselves with God.... O grieve not the holy Spirit of God by which you are sealed, to the day of redemption. There is nothing grieves him more than impure practices, for he is a holy Spirit.... He ... saith, as it were, to the unkind and disingenuous soul, "Hath thou thus requited me, for all the favours and kindness thou hast received from me? Have I quickened thee, when thou wast dead in transgressions? Did I descend upon thee in the preaching of the gospel, and communicate life, even the life of God, to thee; leaving others in the state of the dead? Have I shed forth such rich influences of grace and comfort upon thee? Comforting thee in all thy troubles, helping thee in all thy duties; satisfying thee in all thy doubts and perplexities of soul; saving thee, and pulling thee back from so many destructive temptations and dangers? What had been thy condition, if I had not come unto thee? Could the word have converted thee without me? Could ministers, could angels, have done that for thee which I did? And when I had quickened thee, and made thee a living soul, what couldst thou have done, without my exciting and assisting grace."[1]

THE SPIRIT AND THE PURITANS

John Flavel's preaching and theology of the

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Holy Spirit were representative of English Puritans during his lifetime (1627-91), but Puritanism's view of the Spirit was exceptional.[2] Puritan scholar J. I. Packer believes, "The work of the Holy Spirit is the field in which the Puritans' most valuable contributions to the church's theological heritage were made."[3] Historian Geoffrey Nuttal considers there to be "pioneer thinking about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit" in the writings and ministry of the seventeenth-century English Puritans.[4] However much pioneering work was done by England's Reformed ministers, they followed a path already trail-blazed by Continental Reformers such as John Calvin (1509-63).

Rich theological and devotional material on the Holy Spirit flowed from Calvin's ink well. In Calvin's theology it is through "the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits."[5] The Spirit is "the root and seed of heavenly life in us.... By his secret watering the Spirit makes us fruitful to bring forth the buds of righteousness."[6] In the early twentieth century B. B. Warfield argued that "Calvin's greatest contribution to [theology] lies in the rich development which he gives—and which he was the first to give—to the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit." Warfield went on to state that Calvin is best characterized "pre-eminently [as] the theologian of the Holy Spirit."[7]

In the 1600s Calvinist ministers in the Church of England like Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) pastorally developed Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit and applied it to the Christian conscience. Sibbes' popular work from 1630, *The Bruised Reed*, captured this piety:

> A broken hearted sinner ought to embrace mercy so strongly enforced [in Scripture]: yet there is no truth that the heart shutteth itselfe more against, than this, especially in sense of misery, when the soule is fittest for mercy, until the Holy Spirit sprinkleth the conscience with the blood of Christ, and sheddeth his love into the heart, that so the blood of Christ, in the conscience may cry lowder than the guilt of sinne; for onely Gods Spirit can raise the conscience with comfort above guilt; because he only is greater than the conscience. Men may speake comfort, but it is Christs Spirit that can onely comfort.[8]

In the middle 1640s, Presbyterians codified their doctrine in the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), a document that carried on the theological and pastoral Calvinist tradition within the framework of covenant theology. The Confession referenced the Spirit in the articles on the Trinity, God's eternal decree, creation, the covenant of grace, the effectual call, adoption, sanctification, saving faith, good works, assurance, the church, the communion of saints, the Lord's Supper, and baptism.[9]

In general, Flavel's theology derived from the Calvinism of the WCF as seen in his sermons and books.[10] His is a choice Puritan pneumatology to examine since he mentions the Spirit in most of his writings. He was an influential minister during his time, as one author wrote that he had "more disciples than ever John Owen the Independent, or Rich. Baxter the Presbyterian did."[11] He was also a well-liked author by laypeople in England and New England, and the revivalists of the First and Second Great Awakenings read him and reprinted his works.[12] He is now beginning to receive the attention he deserves from students of Puritanism.[13]

John Flavel's theology of the Holy Spirit is not unique but representative of how Puritans maintained and developed covenant theology in two main areas, the Spirit's relationship to Christ and the Spirit's relationship to the believer. This article will explore both relationships and demonstrate how Flavel applied these doctrines in his ministry.

THE SPIRIT AND CHRIST

The Covenant Theology of John Flavel

Flavel's theology of the Spirit developed within the framework of covenant theology and derived from his Christology. He had three covenants in

view when interpreting Scripture: the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. The starting point in his theology was the covenant of redemption, which was "the foundation for the covenant of Grace."[14] The covenant of grace was God's saving response to humanity's inability to fulfill the terms of the covenant of works.

Flavel's theology of the covenant of redemption developed ideas contained in the WCF. Though the covenant of works and covenant of grace are explicitly mentioned in the Confession, the covenant of redemption is inferred from the article on God's eternal decree, which states that in "the secret counsel and good pleasure" of God's will, the elect were chosen in Christ.[15] The article on Christ the Mediator stated that the Father had an eternal purpose to give Christ a people who were "in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified."[16] The WCF affirms that the plan of redemption was conceived in eternity past between the Father and Son and that the covenant of grace brought about redemption in time and history.

The earliest use of the term "covenant of redemption" occurred before the drafting of the WCF in David Dickson's 1638 address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Dickson spoke of "a covenant of redemption betwixt God and the Mediatour Christ, preceiding the Covenant of Grace and salvation made betwixt God and the faithfull Man through Christ, which is the ground of all this treating that God has with Man in the preaching of the Gospell."[17] Several years later Edward Fisher argued that the covenant of redemption was theologically necessary to satisfy God's justice and repair humanity's fallen state, and so a "speciall Covenant, or mutuall agreement made betwixt God and Christ, as expressed [in] Isa. 53.10."[18] Though the doctrine was not explicated at Westminster, the 1658 Savoy Declaration made explicit reference to the covenant of redemption: "It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to chuse and ordain the Lord Jesus his onely begotten Son, according to a Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man."[19] According to Carl Trueman, the covenant of redemption added to the development of covenant theology by bringing together God's eternal decrees (covenant of redemption) and Christ's execution of redemption in history (covenant of grace), and so became "the nexus between eternity and time with respect to salvation."[20]

Flavel developed the covenant of grace in light of both the covenant of redemption and the covenant of works. The theological background to the covenant of grace can be traced to Calvin.[21] The WCF defined the covenant of grace in response to the covenant of works: "Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by [the covenant of works], the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ."[22] Flavel also defined the covenant of grace as a response to the covenant of works. "What is the covenant of grace?" he asked in his exposition on the Shorter Confession. "It is a new compact, or agreement, made with sinners, out of mere grace, wherein God promiseth to be our God, and that we shall be his people, and to give everlasting life to all that believe in Christ" (Jer 31:33).[23] The covenant of grace was "new" in the sense that it contrasted the covenant of works, which God entered with Adam and his posterity before the fall (Rom 5:12).[24] Flavel provided a definition for the covenant of works: "When God created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death."[25] Because Adam was created morally upright (Eccl 7:29) there was no need for a mediator in the covenant of works. For this reason, God entered into the "new" covenant, the covenant of grace, to provide a mediator to overcome the curse of death that resulted from the covenant of works and to fulfill the eternal plan of salvation provided in the covenant of redemption. Christ was that Mediator, and in Flavel's theology

it was the Spirit who prepared Christ to redeem the elect.

The Spirit's Role in Redemption

Flavel's work *The Fountain of Life* is a collection of sermons on redemption in Christ. Theologically, the sermons begin with the covenant of redemption and continue with the covenant of grace, expounding on Christ's pre-incarnate state, his ministry, death, and resurrection. Flavel's pneumatology developed in step with how Christ was revealed in Scripture as prophet, priest, and king. Flavel applied the work of the Spirit most significantly at the end of the work, highlighting the gift of the Spirit at Christ's exaltation.

Flavel began his book by teaching the covenant of redemption from Isa 53:10-12: "the business of mans salvation was transacted upon Covenant-terms, betwixt the Father and the Son, from all Eternity."[26] "Before this world was made," he preached, "then were his delights in us. While as yet we had no existence; but onely in the infinite purpose of God; who had decreed this for us, in Christ Jesus, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 1. 9."[27] The persons in the covenant transaction were only the Father and Son, because "The Spirit hath another office assigned him, even to apply as Christ's Vicegerent, the redemption designed by the Father, and purchased by the Son for us."[28] As vicegerent, the Spirit is Christ's kingly deputy.[29]

Though the Spirit did not participate in the covenant of redemption, he did play an indispensable role in Christ's incarnation and the commission for his redemptive offices in the covenant of grace. In order for the pre-incarnate Christ to come to earth and redeem the elect, he had to assume "the entire humane nature, consisting of a true human soul, and body," becoming "a true and real man, by that assumption."[30] But Christ's divine sinless nature could only assume a human body untainted by original sin only because the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary (Luke 1:35).[31] The Spirit "formed the body of Christ in the womb, and so prepared him to be a sacrifice for us. He filled that humanity with his unexampled fullness."[32] Patrick Gillespie agreed when he wrote that the Spirit united Christ's divine nature to human nature by miraculous conception.[33] Owen similarly attributed Christ's miraculous conception to the Spirit.[34] Flavel also taught that the Spirit anointed Christ with wisdom during his ministry (Acts 10:38)[35] and allowed him to commune with his Father even on the cross.[36] Primarily, the hypostatic union qualified and "prepared him [Christ] for a full discharge of his mediatorship, in the office of our Prophet, Priest, and King" to become the only mediator between God and sinners in the covenant of grace.[37]

Yet for Christ to have the authority of mediator, he had to be commissioned by the Father. From John 6:27 Flavel taught that Christ's work of redemption would be "invalid and vain, without a due call, and commission from the Father."[38] For this reason, the Father sealed the Son with the Holy Spirit, which ratified and confirmed his credentials, establishing that his authority came from the Father. The Spirit was "the great Seal of Heaven,"[39] Christ's "Credentials from heaven,"[40] which sealed him to the office of Prophet, Priest, and King. For Owen, the Spirit was the "Visible Pledge" at Christ's baptism.[41] Owen also noted how the Spirit prepared Christ for his incarnation, three-fold ministry, death, and resurrection.[42] For the Puritans, the Spirit fully discharged Christ to act as Mediator.

Christ's prophetic office served two purposes, "one External, consisting in a true and full Revelation of the will of God to Men, according to John 17.6.... The other in illuminating the mind, and opening the Heart to receive and embrace that Doctrine."[43] Christ must illuminate the unregenerate's understanding by his Word and Spirit because of natural blindness and ignorance (1 Cor 2:14).[44] Today Christ speaks through his Spirit who was sent as his vicegerent, so that "when the Spirit comes down upon the Souls in the administration of the ordinances; he effectually opens the heart to receive the Lord Jesus, by the hearing of

faith."[45] The Spirit then illuminates the soul with new light so that Scriptural truths are understood and the sinner can come to saving faith. Flavel described three aspects of the Spirit's illumination. This illumination is "a very affecting light" that makes an impression on sinners, as the two men on the Emmaus rode stated, "Did not our hearts burn within us, whilst he talked with us, and opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). The illumined heart receives a growing light that "shines more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov 4:18), so that the truths of the gospel grow clearer in time. For Flavel, the Spirit also illuminated the elect, giving them a saving knowledge of Christ and affectionate love for the gospel. "In a word," he preached, "all saving light endears Jesus Christ to the soul."[46]

Christ's priestly office also served a double purpose, to make oblation and intercession. Examining Gal 3:13-14, Flavel preached that one of the main consequences of Christ's death was to procure the gift of the Spirit for the elect.[47] As the text reads, Christ died "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The "blood of Christ procured for us the Spirit of sanctification. Had not Christ died, the Spirit [would] never [have] come down from Heaven upon any such design."[48] Because of Christ's priestly office, the Spirit was sent to sanctify believers.

Christ also reigns as king through Word and Spirit. This office applies to the elect what Christ "revealed and purchased as a Prophet and Priest."[49] The three-fold offices, then, build on one another: the Spirit illuminates, sanctifies, and then directs believers as they live under Christ's rule. Christ began to rule by his Spirit at his ascension when the Spirit descended. So Christ's "eternal Kingdom is administered by his Spirit, who is his prorex or vicegerent in our hearts."[50] Flavel acknowledged that the Spirit operated upon God's people under the Old Covenant, but now his ministry comes more fully after Christ's exaltation.

> How should we have enjoyed the great blessings of the Spirit and Ordinances, if Christ had not ascended? And surely we could not have been without either. If Christ had not gone away, the comforter had not come, John 16.7. He begins where Christ finished. For he takes of his, and shews it to us, John 16.14. And therefore it's said, John 7.39. The Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. He was then given as a sanctifying spirit, but not given (in that measure as afterwards he was) to furnish and qualifie men with gifts for service. And indeed by Christs ascension, both his sanctifying and his ministering gifts were shed forth more commonly and more abundantly upon men.[51]

Christ ruled his people through Word and Spirit because believers are directed by their great Teacher, the Spirit, who speaks to them from the Word, "this is the way [of holiness], walk in it" (Isa 30:20-21).[52]

Applying the Spirit, the Friend of Believers

After Flavel explained how the doctrine of redemption in Christ transitioned from Christ's pre-incarnate state to the giving of the Spirit, he urged believers to receive and respect the Spirit properly. Since Christ reigns as king, it is a sin to abuse or neglect his kingly gifts, most significantly, the gift of the Spirit. Flavel pleaded with his church members, "See that you abuse not the Spirit, whom Christ sent from heaven at his ascension; to supply his bodily absence among us, and is the great pledge of his care for, and tender love to his people.... O deal kindly with the Spirit, and obey his voice."[53] To help believers, Flavel offered three applications.

First, believers must recognize that at Christ's exaltation the gift of the Spirit was the "first and principal mercy that Christ received" for his people upon entering heaven. Flavel described a picture of this heavenly scene while preaching on John 14:16-17. "No sooner had he set foot upon the

place [heaven] but the first thing, the great thing that was upon his heart to ask the Father for us, was that the Spirit might be forthwith dispatched, and sent down to his people. So that the Spirit is the first-born of mercies. And deserves the first place in our hearts, and esteem."[54] Believers must cherish the Spirit as the greatest of Christ's kingly gifts.

Second, believers can show obedience to the Spirit by understanding his economic function in the Trinity, namely, as one who represents the Father and Son because he was sent by them. Drawing from John 14:26 and 15:26, Flavel connected the Spirit's derived authority as one sent by the Father and Son. "The Spirit comes not in his own name to us (though, if so, he deserves a dear welcome for his own sake, and for the benefits we receive by him which are inestimable,) but he comes to us in the name, and in the loves both of the Father and Son."[55] For this reason, "if you have any love for the God that made you, any kindness for Christ that died for you, shew it by your obedience to the Spirit that comes from them both; and in both their names to us; and who will be both offended and grieved if you grieve him."[56] Fellow Puritan Henry Hickman agreed:

> Though there be no difference as to the Essence of the Persons, yet there is a difference in the oeconomy.... To sin against Father or Son, is not so dangerous, as to sin against the Spirit; because he acting not in his own name, but in the name of Father and Son, from both of whom he is sent; to sin against him, is to sin against all the authority of God, all the love of the Trinity, the lowest condescention that divine goodness ever did, or can make.[57]

Believers' obedience to the Spirit displays their respect for God the Father and Son.

Finally, not only should believers not sin against the Spirit because he represents Father and Son, but they should love and obey him for his divine nature and offices. On account of the Spirit's nature, believers should not grieve the Spirit because he is "God, Co-equal with the Father and Son in Nature, and dignity.... Beware of him therefore, and grieve him not, for in so doing, you grieve God."[58] Flavel lists numerous reasons why the Spirit's offices obligate believers to show gratitude and obedience because he is sent to help us pray, showing us what to ask the Lord in prayer (Rom 8:26). He also comes to comfort believers (John 14:16). He glorifies Christ by taking what is his, namely, his death, resurrection, ascension, and even his present intercession in heaven (Heb 7:25), and declaring it to the believer: "He can be with us in a moment, he can (as one well observes) tell you what were the very last thoughts Christ was thinking in Heaven about you."[59] The Spirit also makes the ordinances of preaching of the Word and the Lord's Supper lively and efficacious. Because of the work of the Spirit who unites us to Christ we now have communion with him. The Spirit soothes believers' infirmities and comforts when they are overwhelmed, preserves them from sin, and through his sanctifying work gives the saints evidence that salvation and heaven are theirs. Flavel concludes his appeal:

> It were endless to enumerate the mercies you have by him. And now, Reader, dost thou not blush to think how unworthy thou hast treated such a friend. For which of all these his Offices or benefits dost thou grieve and quench him? O grieve not the holy Spirit, whom Christ sent as soon as ever he came to Heaven, in his Fathers name, and in his own name to perform all these Offices for you.[60]

Grieving the Spirit, wrote Flavel's friend William Jenkyn, is like loosing your best friend.[61]

Flavel's theology of the Spirit flowed from his Christology within his covenant theology. The Father and Son entered into covenant to redeem the elect. The Spirit's role in the covenant of grace united Christ's divine and human nature and commissioned him for the work of redemption as prophet, priest, and king. The Spirit then cor-

respondingly worked in believers through those same offices to illuminate, sanctify, and rule Christ's people.

THE SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER

The Spirit and the Application of Redemption

John Flavel believed that the redemptive work of the cross must be applied by the Spirit through the preaching of the Word for the elect to enter the covenant of grace, grow in Christ, and find assurance of salvation. Patrick Gillespie also stated that "Covenant favour and grace is tendered to us by the Gospel-Covenant, and effectually applied unto us by the Spirit of the Lord."[62] The Spirit who united Christ's human and divine nature in the hypostatic union now mystically unites believers to Christ in the covenant of grace. The first union was the basis for the second. Christ took on human flesh so that the elect might be united to him and receive all spiritual blessings because "Christ and his benefits go inseparably and undividedly together."[63] In this way, Flavel's theology of union with Christ followed Calvin and Westminster.[64] Flavel's doctrine of union with Christ begins with the work of the Spirit, who effectually calls sinners and works with the Word to save them.

Believers' union with Christ begins with the work of the Spirit. According to Flavel, "there is a strict and dear Union betwixt Christ and all true believers."[65] Two bonds unite believers to Christ. On the divine side, the Spirit bonds the believer to Christ through the preaching of the Word. On the human side, faith is the bond that unites the believer to receive Christ.[66] Following the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Flavel defined this work of the Spirit as the doctrine of effectual calling: "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel."[67] In the covenant of grace the Spirit must convict, enlighten, renew, and persuade sinners to embrace Christ because sin has rendered them unable to do so without Divine causation.

Sinners cannot believe in Christ because of the effects of sin, so the Spirit must first regenerate them. Flavel described Adam's sinless state before the fall as "a Beautiful and Blessed creature.... His mind was bright, clear, and apprehensive of the Law and Will of God; his Will cheerfully complied therewith; his sensitive appetitive and inferior power stood in an obedient subordination."[68] The mind, will, and appetite were the faculties of the soul that reflected God's image.[69] The mind, or understanding, is the leading faculty of the soul, which directed human thoughts and conscience. The will has freedom to make choices and has dominion or command over its decisions. The appetite or affections direct the soul to the object of its desire to love, secure happiness, and delight in God. After the fall, however, sin defaced the beauty of the Divine image and "stampt the Image of Satan upon it: turn'd all its noble power and faculties against the Author and Fountain of its Being."[70] Flavel's brother, Phineas, agreed that because of sin, "The Mind, Will, and Affections of the sinner are all kept and secured against Christ."[71] For this reason, degenerate souls must be made alive or "quickened with a Supernatural principle of life by the Spirit of God" to have new life in Christ.[72] As a result, "Three things must be wrought upon man, before he can come to Christ: His blind understanding must be enlightened; his hard and rocky heart must be broken, and melted; his stiff, fixed, and obstinate will must be conquered, and subdued: but all these are the effects of a supernatural power."[73] This supernatural power is the Spirit's effectual call.

The elect respond to the efficacious call of the gospel when the Spirit works in conjunction with the Word to make the preached Word "irresistible."[74] Scripture "is a successful instrument only when it is in the hand of the Spirit, without whose influence it never did, nor can convince, convert, or save any soul."[75] When Spirit and Word act

together, the darkened mind is illuminated in the knowledge of Christ (Acts 26:18) and the rebellious will is renewed to respond to God (Ps 110:3; Ezek 36:26).[76] With renewed affections believers are now able to see Christ as "the loveliest person souls can set their eyes upon."[77] Flavel drew a timely application to ministers based on the efficacious call:

> See hence the necessity of fervent prayer to accompany the preaching of the Gospel. Without the Spirit and power of God accompanying the Word, no Heart can ever be opened to Christ.... Let Ministers pray, and the People pray that the Gospel may be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, 1 Pet. 1.12. It greatly concerns us that preach the Gospel to wrestle with God upon our knees, to accompany us in the dispensation of it unto the People; to steep that seed we sow among you in tears and prayers before you hear it; and I beseech you Brethren let us not strive alone, joyn your cries to Heaven with ours, for the blessing of the Spirit upon the Word.[78]

The subject of illumination, inward light, brought Puritans into disagreement with the Quakers on issue of the Spirit and Word. Quakers taught God spoke through the written Word, but superseded Scripture's authority through their teachings on inward spiritual experience. The famous Quaker George Fox taught that every individual was born with the inextinguishable light of Christ. For the Puritans, his views extinguished not only the doctrine of total depravity but the necessity of the Word for conversion and sanctification. Minister William Bridges, on the other hand, listed seven reasons why Scripture is a believers' only light: it is true, admirable, safe and sure, pleasant and satisfying, full and sufficient, clear, and the best.[79] As a result, believers are to know and understand Scripture, intend to keep it, and walk by its commands.[80] John Owen encountered Quakerism during his years as Vice-Chancellor at Oxford and summarized the differences between Reformed and Quaker teachings: "the issue between these men and us is this and no other: We persuade men to take as the only rule, and the holy promised Spirit of God, sought by ardent prayers and supplications, in the use of all means appointed by Christ for that end, for their guide. They deal with men to turn into themselves, and to attend unto the light within them."[81] Quakerism, then, elevated the Spirit at the cost of Scripture's role in the life of the believer and in the church.[82]

In 1687 Flavel began correspondence with a former Puritan turned Quaker named Clement Lake.[83] Flavel noted two errors Quakers taught regarding the Spirit. First, he stated, "he cannot be a Christian that rejects the Scriptures as a Rule; but so do the Quakers."[84] Next, "He cannot be a Christian that maketh no distinction between the Godly, and the Ungodly, but doth affirm that Christ enlightens every man that cometh into the World, with a saving Light."[85] Flavel believed the Spirit worked with the Word and only savingly enlightened the elect, contrary to Lake's position. Puritan Robert Fleming concurred with Owen and Flavel, but then went on to state that Quakerism's teaching led individuals to blaspheme the Holy Spirit since Scripture described those who were once enlightened and tasted the Spirit's gift could not be brought again to repentance (Heb 6:4-6).[86] Former Protestants who embraced Quakerism, then, rejected the true person and work of the Spirit. Flavel was unable to convince Lake to leave Quakerism and return to orthodox Protestant views. His pneumatology reinforced Reformed Orthodoxy in contrast to teachings of Quakerism.

The Spirit and the Life in Christ

"Believers are the birth or offspring of the Spirit," Flavel preached.[87] Or, to put it in the apostle Paul's words, believers are "new creatures in Christ" (2 Cor 5:17), filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18), that is, filled with Christ (Col 3:16; Rom 8:9-10). As a result, the Puritans emphasized the power of the Spirit in the new Christian's life. For

Flavel, the power of the indwelling Spirit was visibly displayed in the Christian life, because a holy life gave evidence of its union with Christ. The Spirit also draws believers into communion with God through the means of grace. In these areas, Flavel's theology is representative of Puritan piety.

Flavel listed seven evidences that the Spirit indwells believers.[88] The first evidence of the Spirit's indwelling is conviction and humiliation for sin. As defined from John 16:8-9 the Spirit came to convict the world of sin. As a result, Flavel stated, "where we see no conviction of sin, we can expect no conversion to Christ."[89] Second, the Spirit truly makes alive those united to Christ because they are no longer dead to the law (Rom 8:2). Though some believers may feel estranged from Christ, their hunger and desire to be with him proves the Spirit indwells them. Third, those indwelt by the Spirit desire to see Christ's glory and kingdom spread throughout the world. Fourth, where the Spirit dwells mortification of sin will occur. The Spirit and flesh war against each other (Gal 5:17; Rom 8:13), so that the believer and the Spirit have the same goal in sanctification: to destroy and mortify sin. Fifth, the Spirit directs believers to prayer (Rom 8:26) by stirring up their affections to pray, supplying matters for prayer, and teaching them what to ask God. Sixth, the Spirit helps believers be heavenly-minded (Rom 8:5-6). Flavel commented, "If God, Christ, Heaven, and the world to come, engage the thoughts and the affections of the soul, and the temper of such a soul is spiritual, and the Spirit of God dwelleth there: this is the life of the regenerate: Phil. 3.20."[90] The last evidence of the Spirit's indwelling is that believers follow the Spirit's lead (Rom 8:14). "[It is] the office of the Spirit to guide us into all truth; and [it is] our great duty to follow his guidance" (Rom 8:14).[91]

Because believers are united to Christ, the Spirit draws them into communion with Christ. "Communion with God," John Owen wrote,

> consisteth in his communication of himself unto us, with our returnall unto him, of that which he requireth and accepteth, flowing from that Union which in Jesus Christ we have with him.... It is then ... mutuall communication in giving and receiving, after a most holy and spirituall manner, which is between God and the Saints while they walke together in a Covenant of Peace, ratified by the blood of Jesus.[92]

Flavel concurred with Owen and distinguished the state of communion and actual communion. The state of communion is the position of being united to Christ, because "the same spirit of holiness which dwells in Christ without measure, is communicated by him to the saints in measure, 1 John 4.13. He hath given us of his Spirit."[93] The state of communion, then, defines the reality that exists once believers are united to Christ. Believers receive six benefits from this state of communion with Christ: his names and titles as sons (John 1:12), joint-heirs (Rom 8:17), priests and kings (Rev 1:6); his righteousness (2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9); his holiness (1 Cor 1:30); his death (Gal 2:20); his life and resurrection (Eph 2:1; Gal 2:20); and his glory (John 17:22-24).[94]

Actual communion with God involves spending time communing with the Lord. Flavel listed three ways believers commune with God: contemplating his attributes, practicing religious duties, and responding to different providences God brings into their life.[95] First, believers commune with God as they reflect on his divine attributes such as his immense greatness (Psalm 8) and his purity and holiness (Isa 6:3-5). Contemplating the goodness and mercy of God humbles believers' hearts to thankfulness and obedience (Luke 7:44). Meditating on God's veracity and faithfulness builds believers' confidence (Heb 12:5-6). Recognizing God's displeasure of sin produces repentance and humiliation in a redeemed heart (Ps 51:8; Ezra 9:6). Lastly, God's omniscience obliges believers to live sincerely before God who knows all (Ps 18:23).[96]

Next, believers have communion with God through various religious duties or means of grace such as guarding their hearts,[97] hearing and reading the Word,[98] partaking of the sacraments,[99] and prayer.[100] As believers participate in these duties, the Spirit produces four things in their lives: sorrow for sin (Psalm 32:4-5), the strengthening of faith (Psalm 27:13), growth in love (John 14:21), and consolation during difficulties (1 Pet 4:13-14).[101] Flavel believed using the means of grace drew the heart to God.

Finally, God desires to commune with his people through difficult times in life.[102] Times of spiritual affliction for sin confirm that believers are adopted children of God (Heb 12:7). When believers lack provision they discover that God is all they need (Ps 23:1). Times of danger cause unsure hearts to trust in God for protection (Ps 56:3). Flavel's view of communion with God drove believers to take every opportunity in life to spend time with God.

The Spirit and Assurance of Salvation

The final area that Flavel's pneumatology impacted was assurance of salvation. Later English Puritans like Flavel developed their view of assurance in accord with the WCF. Foundationally, assurance was grounded in Scripture's promises of salvation. From there, believers could examine in their life evidence that those promises were fulfilled, and then the Spirit witnessed to believers' hearts that they were children of God.[103] Assurance, then, grew out of saving faith, and as a result, came to the believer at a point subsequent to conversion.

The WCF stated that assurance was "founded, upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of Adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption."[104] The Puritans described assurance of salvation through a syllogism: "All that truly have received Christ Jesus, they are the children of God. I have truly received Jesus Christ. Therefore I am a child of God."[105]

The first premise – all who receive Jesus are God's children – is based on the promises of Scripture. The divine promise of salvation was Christ-centered, so believers were to "beleeve in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before him."[106] God promised in both the Old and New Testament that all who called upon him would be saved (Joel 3:5 LXX; Rom 10:13). So Paul could write in 2 Tim 2:10, "God's firm foundation stands bearing the seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his.'" The Puritans believed Scripture affirmed that all who trust in Christ will be saved and kept by God.

The second premise—I have truly received Jesus Christ—involved self-examination on the part of professing Christians. Being a thoughtful and seasoned pastor, Flavel anticipated that believers would then ask, "But now what comfort is this to a poor Believer, that God knows who are his?"[107] How does a believer state with confidence, "I have truly received Christ," though he struggles with doubts and sin? To assist believers the indwelling Spirit helps them examine their lives based on how Scripture defined a Christian. In helping believers, the Spirit fulfills the promises of the new covenant made in Jeremiah 31. Flavel remarked,

> It is very observable, that the works of grace wrought by the Spirit in the hearts of believers, are represented to us in scripture, as a transcript, or copy of the written work: Jer. 31.33. I will write my Law in their hearts. Now as a true copy answers the original, word for word, letter for letter, point for point; so do the works of the Spirit in our souls harmonize with the dictates of the Spirit in the Scriptures.[108]

Flavel examined his life for signs of God's grace, and "by this means he attained to a well-grounded assurance."[109] Throughout his ministry he called on believers to examine their lives in

light of the promises of Scripture to gain assurance. Hickman concurred,

> The same Spirit also works in us that Faith by which we are enabled to believe those Scripture Propositions to be divine infallible truths; he also worketh in us every gracious habit, and exciteth those gracious acts, which be the evidences and marks of our conversion, justification, and title to glory; he also helpth to feel and discover those acts in our selves, and by comparing them with the rule, to find their sincerity.[110]

For Flavel, the Scriptures "contain the signs of faith, and the very things within you that answer those signs in the word."[111] Self-examination, then, is biblical: "The questioning and examining of our Faith is a commanded Scripture-duty."[112] Flavel concludes, "For my own part, I verily believe that the sweetest hours Christians enjoy in this World, is, when they retired into their Closets, and sit there concealed from all eyes, but him that made them; looking now into the Bible, then into their own Hearts, and then up to God: closely following the grand Debate bout their Interest in Christ, till they have brought it to the happy desired issue."[113] At that point, Flavel believed the inference from the syllogism—I am a child of God—became a reality for the believer.

The Puritans did, however, have different views on whether or not the Spirit witnessed or sealed believers through Word-examination or immediately apart from the Word.[114] Thomas Mall warned Christians not to expect a "vocal testimony" outside of the Spirit's testimony from Scripture.[115] Likewise, Ezekiel Culverwell agreed when he advised believers to build their assurance on God's mercy and truth as revealed in his Word.[116] Thomas Goodwin, on the other hand, held that the Spirit witnessed immediately and independent from the syllogism: "The sealing of the Holy Spirit is an immediate assurance by a heavenly and divine light of a divine authority, which the Holy Ghost sheddeth in a man's heart, (not having relation to grace wrought or anything in a man's self,) whereby he sealeth him up to the day of redemption."[117]

Flavel's theology of assurance was representative of both the mediate (Word-examination) and immediate sealing views at different times in his ministry.[118] In his 1667 work, *A Saint Indeed*, he denied any notion that the believer found assurance through the Spirit's immediate witness apart from Scripture and examination.[119] He reaffirmed this position in 1679 when he published a sermon on Eph 1:13.[120] Yet by 1685 he did not deny the immediate witness of the Spirit, when stating, "There is a witness of the Spirit ... or sealing which comes not in an Argumentative way, by reasoning from either justification or sanctification: but seems to come Immediately from the Spirit."[121] But within five years, in 1690, he expressed reservation on immediate sealing: "immediate Sealings of the Spirit, which if such a thing be at all, it is but rare and extraordinary. I will not deny there may be an immediate Testimony of the Spirit, but sure I am his mediate Testimony by his graces in us, is his usual way of sealing Believers."[122]

What can explain the change and reservation concerning the immediate view? An event near the end of Flavel's life can help clarify the shift away from the immediate view in 1690, though nothing in his writings provided an explanation for his openness to it from 1679 to 1685. In 1690 Samuel Crisp, the son of Tobias Crisp, reprinted his father's sermons from the 1640s that many Puritans considered Antinomian. To authenticate Crisp's sermons, Samuel Crisp had twelve London ministers validate that the writings were his father's by signing the preface to the republished sermons. Unknown to the twelve ministers, Samuel Crisp attached to his preface an attack on Richard Baxter, who adamantly opposed the rise of Antinomian teachings since the Civil War fifty years earlier because he thought Tobias Crisp connected the doctrine of election and justification in such a way that led to lawless living.[123] So, when Baxter saw the preface signed by orthodox minis-

ters his fury was reignited. John Howe sought to resolve the issue (and pacify Baxter) by having the ministers sign the preface to one of Flavel's 1690 work against Antinomianism.[124] Flavel began writing works against Antinomian doctrine. Antinomian teaching held to the immediate view, so to adhere to the immediate view of sealing was untenable at this point in his ministry.

Antinomian teaching attacked covenant theology's strong emphasis on the use of Scripture in gaining assurance of salvation. If Christians are not bound by law then what measure did they have to gauge that God's promises were fulfilled in their obedience? Patrick Gillespie observed that Antinomians "leave to the Believer no way of trial of the Spirits which yet is his duty, 1 John 4.1. They confound the efficient cause of our obedience which is the Spirit of Grace; and the objective cause, which is the holy rule of the Word of God, the written Word, which two are distinguished, but not to be separated; for the Believer is under both, Ezek. 36.27."[125] Writing against Antinomian teaching, John Sedgwick agreed: "the Spirit and the Word are in such conjunction in the work [of obedience], that he doth leade and guide men into acts of obedience in and by the Law which he himself writes in their hearts, Isaiah 59.21."[126] Flavel concurred and asked, "If once a man pretend the Spirit without the Scriptures to be his Rule, whither will not his own deluding Fancies carry him, under a vain and sinful pretence of the Spirit!"[127] For Flavel, Antinomians made several errors concerning assurance of salvation. First, it is an error to believe, "That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question, Whether we believe, or no: Nay, That we ought no more to question our faith than to question Christ."[128] Second, Antinomians "speak very slightly of trying ourselves by marks and signs of grace.. . to make sanctification an evidence of justification."[129] According to Flavel, the Spirit assured believers with the Word through self-examination. "Scripture-light," he preached, "is a safe and sure Light, a pleasant and sufficient Light."[130] Once again, Flavel's theology reinforced the WCF.

CONCLUSION

John Flavel's theology of the Spirit was not innovative but representative of Reformed Orthodoxy expressed among the English Puritans. His last work was actually an exposition of Westminster's Shorter Catechism, which he used to catechize his people in Dartmouth. His covenant theology established a biblical Christology which in turn built a foundation for his pneumatology. The Spirit assisted in both the hypostatic union of Christ and the mystical union of believers to Christ. The Spirit saved, sanctified, and assured believers through the Word. Overall, Flavel's theology was evangelical, that is, it aimed at the conversion of unbelievers and the sanctification of believers.

Flavel's friend, Harvard's president Increase Mather, pinned a fitting testimony to the influence of Flavel's ministry, which many in Dartmouth described as blessed by the Spirit.

> I am inform'd by unquestionable hands that there was a remarkable pouring out of the Spirit when these Sermons [from Revelation 3:20] were viva voce delivered, a great number of Souls having been brought home to Christ thereby. The Lord grant that the second preaching of them to far greater Multitude by this way of the Press, may by the same Spirit, be made abundantly successful for the Conversion and Salvation of Gods Elect.[131]

ENDNOTES

[1]John Flavell, *The Fountain of Life Opened, or A Display of Christ in His Essential and Mediatoral Glory* (London, 1673), 609-10. The modern spelling of his last name is Flavel; otherwise, when citing seventeenth century sources, spelling, italics, and grammar will be left unchanged throughout this article. For events from Flavel's life, see *The Life of Mr. John Flavel, Minister of Dartmouth* in *The Whole Works of Reverend Mr. John Flavel, Late Minister at Dartmouth in Devon, in Two Volumes* (London, 1701), 1:[i-vii].

[2]Though there is little consensus on the term "Puri-

tan," I will use it to define Flavel throughout this article because it captures the British context for Reformed ministers and theologians during the seventeenth century. John Spurr attempts a definition which emphasizes soteriological and social aspects: The essence of Puritanism "grows out of the individual's conviction that they have been personally saved by God, elected to salvation by a merciful God for no merit of their own; and that, as a consequence of this election, they must lead a life of visible piety, must be a member of a church modeled on the pattern of the New Testament, and must work to make their community and nation a model Christian society" (*English Puritanism, 1603-1689* [London: Macmillan Press, 1998], 5).

[3]J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 179.

[4]Geoffrey F. Nuttal, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 6. Nuttal does, however, see a disputed relationship between the Puritans the Quakers in this work.

[5]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 537.

[6]Ibid., 20:538-40.

[7]Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 21.

[8]Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax* (London, 1630), xxvii-xxviii.

[9]*The Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Agreed Upon by the Assembly of Divine at Westminster* (London, 1649).

[10]According to Richard Muller, Flavel's ministry corresponded with the rise of Reformed High Orthodoxy (1640-1725), which "did not create the Reformed doctrinal system; it modified, developed, and elaborated an extant system in relation to a changing intellectual environment" (*Vol. 1: Prolegomena to Theology* in *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520-1725* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 74).

[11]Quoted in Edward Windeatt, "John Flavell: A Notable Dartmouth Puritan and His Bibliography" (Dartmouth, UK: Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature, and Art, 1911), 14. Windeatt found this remark in an edition of Anthony á Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses* in the Bodleian Library.

[12]For example, Jonathan Edwards quoted Flavel more than anyone except Solomon Stoddard and Thomas Shepard in his revival defense *Religious Affections* (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [ed. John E. Smith; New Haven: Yale University, 1959]). Princeton's president, Archibald Alexander, was converted by reading Flavel's works. See Archibald Alexander, *Practical Truths* (New York: American Tract Society, 1857), 75-78.

[13]J. Stephen Yuille, *The Inner Sanctum of Puritan Piety: John Flavel's Doctrine of Mystical Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2007); John Thomas Jr., *An Analysis of the Use of Application in the Preaching of John Flavel* (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007); Adam Embry, *Keeper of the Great Seal of Heaven: Sealing of the Spirit in the Thought of John Flavel* (Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008); Clifford B. Boone, *Puritan Evangelism: Preaching for Conversion in Late-Seventeenth Century English Puritanism as seen in the Works of John Flavel* (Ph.D. diss., University of Wales, Lampeter, 2009). There were two academic works written on Flavel in the twentieth century: Earl T. Farrell, *The Doctrine of Man and Grace as Held by the Reverend John Flavel* (B. A. thesis, Duke University, 1949) and Kwai Sing Chang, *John Flavel of Dartmouth, 1630-1691* (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1952).

[14]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 32.

[15]*Confession of Faith ... at Westminster*, 10.

[16]*Confession of Faith ... at Westminster*, 19.

[17]Alexander Peterkin, ed. *Records of the Kirk of Scotland, Containing the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies, from the Year 1638 Downwards* (Edinburgh, 1843), 159. The background to the development of the covenant of redemption can be found in Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate, 2007), 80-83.

[18]Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divnity* (London, 1645), 36.

[19]*A Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practiced in the Congregational Churches in England ... in their meeting at the Savoy* (London, 1658), 15.

[20]Trueman, *John Owen*, 87.

[21]Peter Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

[22]*Confession of Faith ... at Westminster,* 17.

[23]John Flavell, *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism with Practical Inferences from Each Question* (London, 1692), 44.

[24]Ibid., 34-35.

[25]Ibid., 32.

[26]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 26.

[27]Ibid., 32.

[28]Ibid., 27. Elsewhere, Flavel does include the Spirit in God's divine decrees: "When the Father, Son, and Spirit sate (as I may say) at the Council Table, contriving and laying the design for the salvation of a few out of many of *Adams* degenerate off-spring, there was none came before them to speak one word for thee; but such was the divine pleasure to insert thy name in that Catalogue of the saved" (604).

[29]"*Vicegerent, Vice-roy*: A Deputy to a King" in H. C. Gent, *The English Dictionarie: or, An Interpreter of Hard English Words* (London, 1623), n. p.

[30]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 51.

[31]Flavell, *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*, 51.

[32]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 573.

[33]Gillespie, *The Ark of the Covenant Opened* (London: 1677), 173.

[34]John Owen, ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ*: or, A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London, 1674), 128-29.

[35]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 579.

[36]Ibid., 392-93.

[37]Ibid., 58.

[38]Ibid., 65, 529.

[39]Ibid., 57.

[40]Ibid., 63.

[41]Owen, *Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, 139.

[42]Owen, *Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, 138-39; John Owen, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu; or, The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (London, 1648), 24-26.

[43]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 96.

[44]Flavell, *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*, 52.

[45]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 117-18.

[46]Ibid., 124.

[47]Ibid., 184.

[48]Ibid., 535.

[49]Ibid., 193.

[50]Ibid., 200. "*Prorex*: Deputie King" in *English Dictionarie*, n. p.

[51]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 539.

[52]Ibid., 621; cf. 539.

[53]Ibid., 572.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Henry Hickman, *The Believers Duty Towards the Spirit, and the Spirits Office Towards Believers, or, A Discourse concerning Believers not Grieving the Spirit, and The Spirits sealing up Believers to the day of Redemption* (London, 1665), 27.

[58]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 573. Flavel offers several passages to justify the Spirit's divinity: 2 Sam 23:23; Gen 1:2; Ps 139:7; and Rom 9:1.

[59]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 573. Though Flavel attributes the idea that we can know Christ's thoughts of us (his intercession on our behalf) to Thomas Goodwin, he does not reference which book Goodwin stated this. Dr. Mark Jones advised me this idea is found in Goodwin's *Christ Set Forth* (London, 1642).

[60]Flavell, *Fountain of Life*, 574.

[61]William Jenkyn, *An Exposition of the Epistle of Jude, Together with many large and useful Deductions ... The Second Part* (London, 1654), 624.

[62]Patrick Gillespie, *The Ark of the Covenant Opened* (London, 1677), 27.

[63]John Flavell, *The Method of Grace, in Bringing Home the Eternal Redemption* (London, 1681), 4.

[64]Calvin, *Institutes*, 20:538.

[65]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 26; 6.191-92; John Flavell, *England's Duty Under the Present Gospel Liberty from Rev. III vers. 20* (London, 1689), 353.

[66]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 32-33, 129; 6.191-92.

[67]Flavell, *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*, 67.

[68]John Flavel, *Pneumatologia, A Treatise of the Soul of Man* (London, 1685), 66.

[69]Flavel, *Soul of Man*, 19-29.

[70]Ibid., 66.

[71]Phineas Flavel, *The Grand Evil Discovered: or, The Deceitfull Heart Tryed and Cast: Being the Substance of some Sermons Preached from Jerem. XVII. 9* (London, 1676), 10.

[72]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 93.

[73]Ibid., 394.

[74]Flavell, *England's Duty*, 42.

[75]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 362.

[76]Flavell, *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*, 67.

[77]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 149.

[78]Flavell, *England's Duty*, 64.

[79]William Bridges, *Scripture Light, The Most Sure Light* (London, 1656), 12-14.

[80]Ibid., 46.

[81]John Owen, *ΣΥΝΕΣΙΣ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΗ, or The Causes, Waies & Means of Understanding the Mind of God as Revealed in His Word with Assurance Therein* (London, 1678), 94.

[82]Michael A. G. Haykin, "John Owen and the Challenge of the Quakers," in *John Owen, The Man and His Theology* (ed. Robert W. Oliver; Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 2002), 140.

[83]*Something by Way of a Testimony concerning Clement Lake of Crediton in Devonshire; with something he wrote in his Life time, by way of Answer, unto John Flavell, Independent Preacher of Dartmouth* (London, 1692).

[84]Ibid., 10.

[85]Ibid., 10.

[86]Robert Fleming, *A Survey of Quakerism* (London, 1677), 56.

[87]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 104.

[88]Ibid., 414-20.

[89]Ibid., 414.

[90]Ibid., 418.

[91]Ibid., 419.

[92]John Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghost, Each Person Distinctly; in Love, Grace, and Consolation: or, The Saints Fellowship With the Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghost Unfolded* (London, 1657), 5.

[93]Flavell, *England's Duty*, 398.

[94]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 168-71.

[95]Flavell, *England's Duty*, 403-12.

[96]Ibid., 403-09. Flavel encouraged believers to trust in the attributes of God in the face of affliction in the second half of *Two Treatises: The First of Fear . . . The Second, The Righteous Man's Refuge in the Evil Day* (London, 1682).

[97]John Flavel, *A Saint Indeed, or The Great Work of a Christian Explained and Pressed from Prov. 4:23* (London, 1671) and *Signs of Grace, and Symptoms of Hypocrisie; Opened in A Practical Treatise Upon Revelations III.17, 18; Being the Second Part of The Saint Indeed* (London, 1698).

[98]Flavell, *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*, 171-77.

[99]Flavell, *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*, 193-95. For sermons on the Lord's Supper, see John Flavel, *Sacramental Meditations Upon Divers Select Places of Scripture* (London, 1679).

[100]Flavell, *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*, 195-201.

[101]Flavell, *England's Duty*, 409-11.

[102]Ibid., 411-12.

[103]*The Confession of Faith ... at Westminster*, 36.

[104]*Confession of Faith ... at Westminster*, 36.

[105]Flavell, *Method of Grace*, 139. Since the drafting of the Westminster Confession of Faith in the 1640s, Puritan divines were known for using syllogisms in their ministry to help believers fortify their faith. See Joel R. Beeke, "Personal Assurance of Faith: The Puritans and Chapter 18.2 of the *Westminster Confession*," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55 (1993): 18-21; R. W. Hawkes, "The Logic of Assurance in English Puritan Theology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 251.

[106]*The Confession of Faith ... at Westminster*, 36.

[107]Flavell, *England's Duty*, 366.

[108]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 412.

[109]*The Life of Flavel*, [1:v].

[110]Hickman, *The Believers Duty*, 83.

[111]Flavell, *The Method of Grace*, 158.

[112]John Flavell, *The Second Appendix: Giving a Brief Account of the Rise and Growth of Antinomianism* in ΠΛΑΝΗΛΟΓΙΑ, *A Succinct and Seasonable Discourse of the Occasions, Causes, Nature, Rise, Growth, and Remedies of Mental Errors* (London, 1691), 351. He lists several verses to support this claim: 2 Cor 13:5; 2 Pet 1:10; 1 Cor 10:12; 2 John 8.

[113]Flavell, *Rise and Growth of Antinomianism*, 407-08.

[114]For overviews on the history of interpretation for the sealing of the Spirit, see Garth B. Wilson, "The Puritan Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: A Critical Investigation of a Crucial Chapter in the History of Protestant Theology" (Ph.D. diss., Toronto School of Theology, Knox College, 1978), 223-51; Sinclair B. Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1987), 116-24; Michael A. Eaton, *Baptism with the Spirit: the Teaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1989); J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 179-89; Joel R. Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1999); Joel Beeke, "Introduction," in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Eureka, CA: Tanski Publications, 1996), 1:4-22; Choon-Gill Chae, "Thomas Goodwin's Doctrine of the Sealing of the Holy Spirit: Historical, Biblical, and Systematic-Theological Analysis" (Th.M. thesis, Toronto Baptist Seminary & Bible College, 2010).

[115]Thomas Mall, *The Axe at the Root of Professors Miscarriages* (London, 1668), 42-43.

[116]Ezekiel Culverwell, *Time Well Spent in Sacred Meditation* (London, 1634), 17.

[117]Thomas Goodwin, *An Exposition of the First Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians*, in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. 1 (Eureka, CA: Tanski, 1996), 233.

[118]Iain Murray suggested development in Flavel's understanding of assurance from *A Saint Indeed* to *The Soul of Man*, but he did not come to any conclusions because of the lack of dating for Flavel's writings in the 1820 edition of his *Works*. See Iain H. Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism: Old Truths for a New Awakening* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2005), 187.

[119]Flavell, *A Saint Indeed*, 28-29.

[120]Flavell, *Sacramental Meditations*, 58-83.

[121]Flavel, *Soul of Man*, 240.

[122]John Flavel, *Vindiciae Legis & Foederis: or, A Reply to Mr. Philip Carey's Solemn Call* (London, 1690), 77.

[123]Truman, *John Owen*, 114; Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 158; Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765* (London: The Olive Tree, 1967), 28.

[124]J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003), 413-14.

[125]Patrick Gillespie, *The Ark of the Covenant Opened* (London, 1661), 273.

[126]John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized, or, A Glasse for the Lawlesse* (London, 1643), 40.

[127]Flavell, *Rise and Growth of Antinomianism*, 315-16.

[128]Ibid., 319.

[129]Ibid., 322.

[130]Flavell, *A Succinct and Seasonable Discourse*, 141.

[131]Flavell, *England's Duty*, xxxv-xxxvi.

The SBJT Forum

Editor's Note: Readers should be aware of the forum's format. Tom J. Nettles, Kelly M. Kapic, Tom Schwanda, Ryan Kelly, and Ian Hugh Clary have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses. These writers are not responding to one another. Their answers are presented in an order that hopefully makes the forum read as much like a unified presentation as possible.

SBJT: From a broad historical perspective, what benefits do you see for modern Christianity from Puritanism?

Tom J. Nettles: "By their fruits you shall know them," said Jesus. A candid examination of the fruit of Puritanism points to it as one of the most beneficial and perennial fruit-bearing trees in the Christian forest. The problems that it retained as a bilious hangover from the medieval Christianity are abundantly clear. It did not escape the state-churchism of so-called Christendom entirely and consequently some Puritan writings and actions showed an overly confident zeal that godly political structures would aid in establishing the Kingdom of God. Moreover, they sought to justify repression of certain religious opinions by law and, in some instances, even believed that physical repression served a gospel purpose. These hangers-on of the medieval synthesis, however, were not endemic to the doctrinal and experiential power of Puritanism and when historical development, specifically the Act of Uniformity in 1662, rendered their political ambitions a moot point, their true genius flourished.

What self-corrective resided within Puritanism? The logic of seeking a pure local church disciplined by standards of regeneration developed into arguments for *liberty of conscience* and a believers' church. Thomas Helwys, a Puritan layman, argued for believers' baptism only and liberty of conscience in *The Mistery of Iniquitie* prodding Puritans to give up the remnants of Antichrist and adopt the gospel logic of their own theology. Helwys died in the effort but rang a bell that still sounds. Christopher Blackwood, another devotee of Puritanism, did the same in *The Storming of Antichrist* when he said that the two errors still in need of correction were infant baptism and repression of conscience. Roger Williams, Puritan to the core, found the intolerance of Massachusetts Bay antithetical to the deep emphasis on divine

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sovereignty in salvation, total depravity, effectual calling, and the effectual sacrifice of Christ for his people so zealously embraced by him and his Puritan friends. In *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* he championed liberty of conscience as the true implication of this theology. Eventually, by 1639, Williams adopted a Baptist ecclesiology as the only view of church life consistent with the new covenant way of recognizing and gathering together the people of God.

Puritanism provided the matrix from which *Baptist life* emerged. Small pockets of Puritans became convinced that their goal of reforming Anglicanism was impossible to attain. The Church of England had its ordinances and its ministry from Rome, they observed, and thus were impossible for the foundation of a pure church. This led to Separatism which led to forming the church of baptized believers only. The theology and the experience of grace promoted by Puritanism formed the earliest self-identity of Baptists. One cannot read the works of John Smyth, John Spilsbury, William Kiffin, Benjamin Keach, Hercules Collins and others without seeing the conscious indebtedness to their Puritan friends even while they differed with them on the ecclesiological development of their theology. Samuel Pearce, that great promoter of missions, when writing of unity and love made a certain point by affirming, "But we must unite with the great Dr. Owen." Looking at the confessional and catechetical history of Baptists shows their purposeful identification with the doctrinal, and much of the ecclesiological, framework of Puritanism.

Baptist understanding of *worship* arose from the Puritan discussions of the regulative principle developed from the views of Zwingli and Calvin. While not providing an absolutely uniform understanding of the practice of corporate worship, they did have ongoing efforts to remove the superfluous and non-warranted elements on the basis of a common authority. Their discussions could be of much benefit to us today, employing, as Horton Davies wrote, "the sufficiency of Scripture as a directory for worship." The alarm of the pure traditionalist and the destabilizing impact of "contemporary" worship practices might be minimized and brought to center by consistent reference to a common authority.

Another salutary influence of Puritanism is in the *Christ-centeredness* of theology. As John Owen pointed out, the post-lapsarian, ante-deluvian theology was all built on a covenant promise centered on the certain victory of a redeemer over Satan and the effects he wrought through tempting Eve. In the revealed promise of Gen 3:15, Christ is prefigured, and Owen added, "This is He about whom this saving Word of God or evangelical promise was uttered." No group was more intense about the pre-eminence of the covenant of grace than were the Puritans; their insistence on this provides a hermeneutical framework unveiling the beautiful coherence of Scripture and within which all of Scripture may be understood. In addition, for the Puritans a true Christian orientation to the practice of theology was emphasized. The methods by which one may be seen as a master of secular arts, sciences, and philosophies will not do for the true theologian. As Owen wrote, "If you wish to be adept in this spiritual wisdom, you must daily cultivate a holy communion with God in the mystery of His gospel through the merits of Jesus Christ, and you must know by experience the power and efficiency of saving truths."

Puritan doctrine undergirded the most thorough and God-centered *spiritual awakenings*. Puritanism was the power behind the revival preaching of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. A view of religious experience that can produce such irreplaceable and transcendently valuable works as *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* and *Religious Affections* and *Charity and its Fruits* and *The Nature of True Virtue* must be considered as among the most elevating and ennobling mental and spiritual phenomena of human history. Puritan views of conversion, assurance, and sanctification promoted an awakening theology of the purest sort that insinuated its influence into

American culture and thought in ways beyond full observation.

The influence of Puritanism on *preaching* also is powerful. Spurgeon, the "Prince of Preachers," revealed his indebtedness to the Puritans in manifold ways. His knowledge of their literature and the fascinating distinctions in their personal writings, experiences, and styles of ministry was remarkable. From Bunyan to Owen and myriads in between, Spurgeon was aware of the literature and the peculiar spiritual benefit of each writer. His own preaching ministry was an unceasing torrent of Puritan insights into doctrine, conversion, holiness, evangelism, pastoral theology, and pastoral ministry. Not by the unfolding of any one Puritan in particular, but by his absorption of their entire manner of life and ministry, Spurgeon dominated the evangelical pulpit of the last half on the nineteenth century. Light a candle to any of his thousands of printed sermons and soon the fragrance of Puritanism will fill the room. The modern recovery of interest in Puritans as spiritual guides is due in large part to one of the most earnest and influential preachers of the twentieth century, Martin Lloyd-Jones. A theology that can produce such pulpit giants as these is well worth a serious investment of our own time.

Finally, they were masters of the *spiritual life*. A couple of days spent with Packer's *A Quest for Godliness* and Joel Beeke's *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* will be a transforming experience. Not only do subjects like meditation, conscience, communion with God, prayer, worship, assurance, cultivation of holiness, and profitable use of the Lord's day take on peculiar importance but the experiential power of justification, atonement, the inspiration of Scripture, and total depravity gives depth to one's daily walk in the Spirit. In Puritanism we find all these things—and more—wed with intellectual power, rigorous theological insight, pastoral faithfulness, and humble submission to the triune God.

SBJT: What are some encouragements and also cautions you might give to folks who want to read the Puritans?

Kelly M. Kapic: One of the most surprising and encouraging signs I see within evangelicalism is the rediscovery of the importance of learning from history. There are signs that more and more evangelicals are reading authors from all periods of church history, and not merely the trendy writers of today. For example, interest in Patristic texts is booming, as North American Christians are finding that the theological questions and pastoral struggles of those early centuries remain relevant in our day.

Yet even more than these ancient leaders of the Church, the Puritans are drawing the attention of evangelicals. Names such as John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, John Bunyan, Thomas Goodwin, Richard Sibbes, Richard Baxter, and Thomas Boston are not only better known now, but also more widely read. Publishing houses are printing more and more quality republications and new editions of these and other Puritan authors. Furthermore, thoughtful monographs and pastoral books growing out of engagement with Puritan classics are arriving off the press far more regularly now, thus adding to our knowledge and appreciation for what this particular expression of Protestantism has to offer in the story of Christian spirituality.

With this in mind, let me offer just a few words to encourage people to read these faithful masters. Here are just a few samples of what you will discover—or be reminded of—as you read the Puritans.

The glory of God's justifying and freeing grace in Christ by his Spirit. The best of Puritan writings continually remind their readers of sinful humanity's plight before the holy God. This acknowledgment of painful human sinfulness gives them an extraordinary appreciation for God's radical grace. We are often tempted to downplay human sin in order to highlight God's love, but the

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Puritans argued that you actually misunderstand or pervert God's love if you neglect to understand the depth of human rebellion against God. But with that understanding, the wonder of the divine humiliation in the coming of the Son and the cost of the cross become gloriously unnerving. We are set free in God's love and grace as embodied and secured in Jesus Christ. Such discovery of the grandeur of redemption is experienced only in the power of God's life-giving Spirit.

Don't pit human agency against divine sovereignty. It is always a struggle for believers to hold together the biblical truths of the Lord's sovereign rule and also the responsibility of human actions. We tend to pit sovereignty and responsibility against one another, and, depending upon one's preference, we choose which perspective resonates most deeply with us. But the best of the Puritan authors refused to choose, instead holding up the tension found in scripture. Thus, at times it is uncomfortable to hear them emphasize the importance of human response and work, while at other times they lean so heavily upon divine governance of this world that it can almost sound like our actions are irrelevant. Each emphasis can slip into its characteristic fatal flaw, either by letting human responsibility lead to a form of "works righteousness" or by letting divine sovereignty induce a stoic fatalism. But at their best, Puritans preserve human dignity as well as confidence that God can be trusted as the Sovereign Lord. Such a paradoxical perspective reflects the mood of scripture and remains hugely relevant for our own day. The Puritans can help us recapture this dynamic truth.

Take human psychology seriously as you engage in pastoral care. Puritan pastors were known as physicians of the soul. Their great concern was for the spiritual health of their congregants. One of the ways they ministered to their people was by spending time with them, often in their own homes, talking and praying over the kitchen table. They listened and heard the particular struggles and personalities of their people. Consequently, they entered into the pulpit as informed preachers, able to apply the word faithfully to those God gathered. They did not try to make every sermon hit everyone in the congregation equally, but they consciously aimed to make sure they spoke in ways that were relevant to everyone in the congregation over the course of a period of time. In this way they slowly counseled the whole congregation through their sermons. This included speaking in ways that made sense to the different dispositions that one discovered in the congregation. Some parishioners struggled with melancholy, others with a lack of passion for Christ, and still others were beset with nagging doubts. By knowing their people Puritan leaders discovered how best to apply God's word to their lives.

Before I conclude, however, let me also add a brief note of caution as you read the Puritans. I mention these because through the years I have witnessed believers who discover the Puritans sometimes end up struggling with one of the following.

Don't let sobriety and introspection replace your zeal for life in God's Kingdom. The Puritans took their faith as seriously as possible, and this is wisdom. However, sometimes this also resulted in an overemphasis on self-reflection and somberness, driven by unending introspection. Yes, Leland Ryken is correct to argue that the Puritans were not as grave as they are sometimes presented. But there is a lingering spirit of self-analysis that one learns from the Puritans. This can be helpful to better learn the complexity of your own heart, but it can also become paralyzing. Far too often I have read of Puritans weighed down unnecessarily with doubts and lack of assurance. While I can't argue it here, I believe that one of the reasons so many Puritan authors became such able spiritual directors is because they were dealing with some of the mess that this tradition itself fostered.

Don't try to recreate the seventeenth century. It should be obvious, but I must mention it. Far too often I find that when Christians begin to drink deeply from the well of Puritanism, they end

up trying to re-inhabit the seventeenth century. Consequently, this tends to make them detached and incredibly judgmental of our own day. The result is marginalization, not for the sake of the gospel, but because one is trying to import a distant past into the present. No, it is far better to be critical readers of the Puritans, even those we most respect. We do not need to dress or talk like them in order to grow from their insights. Learn as much as you can, be as challenged as possible, but also recognize they speak to us from a foreign time and culture. They offer brilliant contributions but also unexpected blind spots. Take up, read, delight, but also remember that they also had the blind spots of their own time.

There is far greater diversity among the Puritans than people realize. Even in this brief forum, I have spoken of "the Puritans," as if that represents a monolithic group. In truth, there is far greater breadth and disagreements among the Puritans than most people know. If one reads any scholarly treatments of this movement, you quickly discover that it is hard to even come up with an agreed upon definition of "puritanism." They had all kinds of theological, political, and ecclesial disagreements among them. Our selective republication of puritan works probably lends itself to this misperception, since we tend to publish the works that resonate with our perspective, and neglect the ones that don't. Even someone like Richard Baxter is far more complicated than contemporary readers tend to know. For instance, though people know him for his famed work, "The Reformed Pastor," they don't often realize the fierce disagreements that Baxter and Owen had because they are unaware of so many of Baxter's more controversial writings. They don't know this because those writings are not reprinted. In truth, Puritanism is not a monolithic movement, but it is a tree with various branches reaching out in different directions and blossoming at various stages.

In the end I pray that far more pastors and laypeople become familiar with the theological and pastoral wisdom offered by the Puritans. Time spent learning from some of these masters can change people's lives—I have seen it happen time and again. But we learn from them not as impeccable gurus, but as wise fellow journeyman who took careful notes as they walked the path ahead of us. Let us praise God for the breathtaking vistas of God's glory they recorded for us, and let us learn from some of their own struggles along the way.

SBJT: Isaac Ambrose is not a household name among evangelicals. Who is he and why is he important for us to know today?

Tom Schwanda: The Puritans are experiencing a resurgence of interest, at least in some circles today. While the names of Richard Sibbes, John Owen, and Richard Baxter, among others, are likely to be known, others have not received much attention. Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664) falls in this second category. This is unfortunate since he has much to teach the contemporary church. Ambrose was raised in Lancashire, England, and educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, in preparation for his ministry in the Church of England. He served as one of the King's preachers. This was a select group of four itinerant preachers who were originally charged with preaching the Reformation doctrines in a region that was strongly Roman Catholic and, therefore, quite resistant to the Protestant emphasis on grace. After serving briefly in two smaller congregations Ambrose became the pastor at St. Johns Church, Preston, in c.1640. He remained there until c.1657 when he moved to the more obscure location farther north in Garstang. Ambrose actively participated in the efforts to establish Presbyterianism in his region and experienced the common resistance and struggles of being a nonconformist minster including being ejected from his pulpit by the Act of Uniformity of 1662. Early sources often recognize Ambrose's

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unusual practice of taking an annual month-long retreat in the woods each May. Even though he was married and had three children he would retire to review his diary, study Scripture, and meditate upon various aspects of his life and ministry. Ambrose is best known today for his massive work *Looking Unto Jesus* that traces the life of Jesus Christ from his incarnation until his second coming. Another significant work is *Media* that examines the use of spiritual disciplines in the process of sanctification.

Why does Isaac Ambrose matter today? There are at least three specific lessons that he offers. First, union with Christ is central to his theology. Although many Protestants affirm the importance of union with Christ as the beginning of a person's relationship with God, contemporary Evangelicals rarely understand this as fully as Ambrose did. The result is that we tend to focus upon the forensic theme of justification with little regard for the relational dimension and fellowship with God. This neglects, as Ambrose contended, a proper theology of union and communion with Christ that he and other Puritans often called spiritual marriage. Not only does Jesus save and forgive a person's sins, he also draws that individual into a deepening intimacy with the Trinity. Therefore, Ambrose declares, "Union is the ground of our communion with Christ; and the nearer our union, the greater our communion" (*Looking Unto Jesus* [1658], 913). The contemporary church would greatly benefit from expanding its understanding of union with Christ to include the full doctrine of communion or spiritual marriage with Christ. This would increase the opportunity for enjoying the relational intimacy that Jesus offers to all who will embrace it. That would further enable people to join with Ambrose in declaring, "Oh it's an happy thing to have Christ dwell in our hearts, and for us to lodge in Christ's bosom! Oh its an happy thing to maintain a reciprocal communication of affairs betwixt Christ and our souls!" (*Looking Unto Jesus*, 40).

Second, Ambrose can guide Christians in developing a biblical theology of Christian experience. There is incredible spiritual hunger today and unfortunately many people gravitate to any experience that is appealing without discerning its integrity or soundness of doctrine. Ambrose recognized the critical importance of integrating the cognitive or head knowledge with the affective or heart knowledge. Clearly, he would be alarmed to discover the growing tendency among some sections of the evangelical church to reduce or even ignore the importance of Scripture or over emphasizing the intellect to the neglect of the affections. The structure of *Looking Unto Jesus* vividly illustrates Ambrose's approach. As he explores each dimension of Jesus' ministry he first establishes the biblical foundation for it and then employs soliloquy, or preaching to one's self, to stir up the affections so as to experience that aspect of Christ's life. This is further reinforced by the familiar emphasis within Puritanism of Word and Spirit. God graciously speaks to us through the objective truth of Scripture and guides us in understanding it through the subjective experience of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Ambrose reminds readers, "if the Spirit of Christ come along with the Word, it will rouse hearts, raise spirits, work wonders" (*Looking Unto Jesus*, 723).

Recovering a contemplative piety is the third insight from Ambrose. According to him contemplation is "soul recreation" in which a person is continually looking at or beholding Jesus and therefore, one of the significant ways in which a person can enjoy God. Ambrose's conviction was that heavenly meditation was one of the primary spiritual practices for cultivating one's relationship with God. *Looking Unto Jesus* confirms the obvious importance of this for Ambrose and perhaps that book's popularity was due in part to people's hunger to learn how to meditate on heaven. Moreover this desire for heaven was not an escape or withdrawal from the many dangers the English Puritans faced in the seventeenth-century. Rather, since they had entered into spiritual marriage with Jesus they intensely desired the consum-

mation of what they had already tasted in part on earth. Therefore, the practice of looking unto Jesus or heavenly meditation was a contemplative expression of love and grateful gazing upon Jesus. Further, for Ambrose contemplation was Word-centered, Christ-focused, Spirit-empowered, and God-glorified. Perhaps the recovery of Ambrose's contemplative piety today faces its greatest challenge in the Western world where people are so attached to their earthly possessions that the prospects of heaven are not that compelling. Therefore, Ambrose can direct readers to "get we into our hearts an habit of more heavenly-mindedness, by much exercise, and intercourse, and acquaintance with God, by often contemplation, and foretaste of the sweetness, glory, and eternity of those mansions above" (*Media* (1657), 55).

Clearly Isaac Ambrose matters today just as he did in the seventeenth-century because he can guide the way to a more robust and experiential faith that emphasizes both the intellect and affective dimensions of piety and creates a relationship of intimacy that takes great delight and enjoyment in God.

SBJT: John Owen has been referred to as "Prince of the Puritans." Why? What was unique, if anything, about his contribution to the movement?

Ryan Kelly: I suppose I should start with a rather picky point. Though "Prince of the Puritans" is a common way to refer to John Owen today (a quick search of the web demonstrates this well), I have not yet been able to determine exactly who first referred to Owen in this way. It is the subtitle of Andrew Thomason's biography of Owen—at least in today's reprints (*John Owen: Prince of the Puritans* [Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2004]). But in the 1850s, when it was first written to be included in *The Works of John Owen*, it was simply named "The Life of Dr. Owen," and in no place did it use this lofty title. It may be C. H. Spurgeon's commendation of Owen that comes closest. "It is unnecessary to say that he is the prince of divines," Spurgeon wrote of Owen in 1867 (*Commenting and Commentaries* [London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1867], 103). While there was certainly high praise for Owen long before this, apparently it is Spurgeon's language that has given birth to this moniker, which today is oft-repeated and never footnoted.

Nevertheless, wording aside, there have been many claims to Owen's eminence, from his own day to the present. And that is the point of the question: is it accurate to assign more prominence to Owen among the many other great saints of his time?

In many ways, Owen was not that unique for his day. This is not simply playing the contrarian. It is important to emphasize that he was one of many "hotter sort of Protestants;" one of many who bemoaned that the church in England was still "halfly reformed." Owen's theology was certainly not unique, but was one representative within the broader movement of Reformed Orthodoxy. Many of his contemporaries had similar influence—some with even more political clout and others with seemingly more effective preaching. It is also necessary to note that Owen had his critics. Many of these critics, not surprisingly, strongly disagreed with his theology. But he also faced some disparagement for his persona: some thought he was too overbearing, too stern; and many more thought his knee-high leather boots and cocked hat were far too ostentatious for a university Vice-Chancellor. Even today, he's as famous (or infamous) for his long and lumbering writing style as much as almost anything else—a reputation that Owen seems to have garnered even in his own day.

All of that being said, I do think there are at least three ways in which Owen was particularly important for his time and in the church since.

(1) His literary output was unique for its volume, diversity, and importance. The sheer mag-

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nitude of material Owen produced is staggering, especially when we today consider that it was under candlelight, with quill pen, and alongside many competitions for time and concentration (e.g., civil war, poor health, family deaths, persecution, ecclesiastical-political leadership, running an almost decimated Oxford University, etc.). His *Works* stretch twenty-three volumes in the still-in-print Banner of Truth edition, twenty-four volumes in the 1850-55 edition. A few of Owen's contemporaries produced a similar amount of writing, such as Thomas Manton whose works reach twenty-two volumes, but, in the case of Manton, the majority of his works are published sermons. Owen's *Works* contain two volumes of Parliamentary sermons, but ten-fold are the significant works of polemics, doctrinal treatise, practical theology, and one massive commentary on Hebrews with over 1,000 pages of prefatory material and 2,500 pages of commentary (vols. 17-23 in the Banner edition). This and several other works have proven to be unique contributions to the church. His several works on Reformed spirituality have become somewhat movement-defining (vols. 1, 2, and 4). Abraham Kuyper thought that Owen's massive work on the Holy Spirit (vol. 3) was unparalleled. Of course, even those who disagree with Owen's view of particular redemption know that it is unavoidable to interact with the standard-bearer, *The Death of Death* (vol. 10). Owen attempted at least one work on the nature and structure of theology. This Latin work, *Theologoumena Pantadapa* (1661), is sadly not included in the Banner edition of *Works*, though there is a paraphrastic English translation (*Biblical Theology* [Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994]). There are certainly some forgettable sections (one that defends the inspiration of the Masoretic vowel points); it is nevertheless an important and often overlooked representative of seventeenth-century "Federal Theology"—a biblical-historical model of theological organization. In short, the enormity, variety, and effect of Owen's work stands out in his day—or any day for that matter.

(2) Owen was a prominent figure in the very "Puritan-esque" times of England's Revolution and Restoration. He preached to Parliament the day after the King was executed for treason. With the King out of the way, the army and Parliament leaned heavily in the Puritan-direction; thus, the 1650s looked to be an unprecedented time to implement many Puritan ideals. Owen enjoyed a unique relationship with Oliver Cromwell, functioning as a leading advisor to the Lord Protector on the complex and ever-changing ecclesiastical-political climate. Indeed, Owen was one of only a handful to construct several legislative proposals for settling a state church during the Protectorate—one that would be healthy, godly, effective, and uncoercive. All the while, Owen was both Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University and Dean of one of its leading colleges, Christ Church. For almost a decade, Owen had the charge of restoring order and glory to England's oldest university. He was also increasingly a leading figure of the growing movement of Congregational churches in England (and America). This leadership became more apparent and more needed when in 1662 the Independents were ejected from their churches and forbidden to preach publicly. Many Puritans, like John Bunyan, suffered years of imprisonment. Though Owen preached and conducted house meetings during these days, he did not face similar persecution (likely because of the already well-established respect he had broadly earned). But Owen did not take such freedom for granted: he constantly pleaded for the release of his imprisoned brethren, wrote many defenses of Reformed non-conformity, repeatedly appealed to the King for liberty, and gave financial aid to many persecuted Puritans and their families. In these latter days, he was offered the presidency of Harvard and the pastorate of the highly-esteemed First Congregational Church of Boston, but he turned them down to remain in his diverse, needed work in England. Therefore, it is an understatement to say that Owen had his fingers in many pies. Whether literary, pastoral, theological, political, academic/

educational, or social, his efforts were indeed diverse and he held a prominent place in each. He was not just a "jack of all trades," but more like a "master of many." And, whether the Puritans were "in season" (Revolution) or "out of season" (Restoration), he was not only faithful but prominent.

(3) The influence of Owen's life and writing is also quite telling. He has not enjoyed the notoriety of a Luther, Calvin, or Edwards, but it is difficult to think of any contemporary of Owen who has had a broader and longer lasting influence. A few, such as Thomas Goodwin, were indeed very significant in the mid-seventeenth-century, but they have not had the same impact on the centuries to follow. Conversely, Owen has been the focus of approximately 30 books and dissertations over the last 20 years. Four significant scholarly works on Owen were published in 2008 alone. More than a few scholars have a major academic work on Owen in process. And, of course, he's not just of interest to scholars. His practical writings are as widely enjoyed as ever, thanks in part to the modern, unabridged versions edited by Kelly Kapic and Justin Taylor (*Overcoming Sin and Temptation* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2006] and *Communion with the Triune God* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2007]). Owen's stock seems to be rightly on the rise, further confirming Spurgeon's commendation of more than a century ago.

SBJT: How did James Ussher reconcile his Puritan convictions with loyalty to the Anglican Church?

Ian Hugh Clary: If the name James Ussher (1581-1656) is familiar it is likely due to his chronological conclusion that the world was created in 4004 BC. While some may sneer at such calculations, the fact that his date was accepted amongst a host of others offered across Renaissance Europe is a testimony to Ussher's importance as an historian. Before answering the question of his ecclesiological convictions it is worth reflecting for a moment on Ussher's life.

Born in Dublin, Ussher studied at the city's newly-chartered Trinity College where he received a Puritan education. In 1607, after obtaining a Bachelor of Divinity he became lecturer of theological controversies at his *alma mater*, expending much of his energy rebutting Jesuit challenges to Protestantism. His first publication in 1613 defended the succession of the Church of Ireland. Throughout his career Ussher maintained a prolific scholarly output, even when engaged in political affairs later in life. In the nineteenth-century his *Works* were collected and published in seventeen volumes. His interests ranged from theology, patristic and British history, biblical chronology, textual criticism, and church government.

A number of his writings retain a level of influence. In 1615 he was a key member of the Convocation that drafted the Irish Articles, a Calvinistic statement of faith that sought to supplement England's Thirty-Nine Articles. Of them John Murray said, "[T]he covenant theology of the Irish Articles laid the foundation for the superstructure erected by the Westminster Divines." Ussher also collected a common-place book known as *A Body of Divinity* (1645) of which A. A. Hodge claimed, "[H]ad more to do in forming the Catechism and Confession of Faith than any other book in the world." The nineteenth-century biblical scholar J. B. Lightfoot called Ussher's work on the letters of Ignatius of Antioch "critical genius"—Ussher had determined the veracity of six of the seven letters of the middle recension.

Ussher was not an ivory-tower theologian but was involved in the affairs of the church. He quickly moved up the ecclesiastical ladder becoming Archbishop of Armagh in 1625 making him Primate over the Church of Ireland. Ussher saw his role in terms of setting the Irish Church apart from its English sister. However, due to his *jure divino* (by divine law) political philosophy Ussher sided with the crown during the Civil Wars. In spite of this, his standing amongst the Reformed

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orthodox kept him within the purview of the Puritan Parliament, who sought to win him to their cause. While maintaining cordial relations, Ussher declined offers to attend the Westminster Assembly deeming it an unlawful gathering. When Charles I was executed in 1649, Ussher fainted at the site of God's anointed put to death. During the Interregnum Ussher put his polemical pen to rest and returned to biblical chronology, an interest since student days at Trinity. His final theological testimony is the justly-famous *Annals of the World* (1650-54).

Before considering Ussher's Puritanism in relation to his office in the Established Church, some clarification is in order. First, the word Puritan is widely debated. In the twentieth-century a number of scholars argued that Puritanism was distinct from "Anglicanism." The work of Patrick Collinson, however, has shown that a Puritan was a "hotter sort of Protestant," distinguished more by godly zeal than denominational affiliation. The definition presupposed here understands the Puritan as one who reacted against medieval forms of worship by seeking further reform of the church; was zealous for evangelism and discipleship; stood in the stream of catholic theology while maintaining the maxims of the Reformation; and, strove to magnify God in his or her life through personal holiness. Second, there has also been some debate as to whether Ussher was a Puritan. In *The Irish Puritans* (Darlington, 2003), Crawford Gribben argued that Ussher was, while Alan Ford is not as committed in his *James Ussher* (Oxford, 2007). Yet, if Collinson's statement about Puritans as Protestants of a hotter sort is true, and the definition above stands, then there is no reason to see why Ussher is not suited to the name. This is relevant to our discussion in that Collinson rightly sees little to distinguish a Puritan from the Established Church because many Puritans conformed. Ussher's Puritanism is not any more incongruous to his episcopalianism than Richard Sibbes' or John Preston's. The question relative to Ussher's context is how he related to Protestantism of a different ecclesiological stripe. This can be answered in terms of his ecclesiastical politick and writings.

As Primate, Ussher maintained a "don't ask, don't tell" policy when it came to exiled Presbyterians ministering in the Church of Ireland, especially the Ulster Plantation. He did not require strict conformity to the forms of liturgy that had been established in England. The Irish Church was desperate for good clergy, and the influx of Scottish Presbyterians provided much needed support. Ussher's operating principle was toleration and he was open to receive their services. After the arrival of Laudian agents in Ireland Ussher's program would dissipate, but his mediating ecclesiology would continue to be expressed.

After the 1641 Uprising in Ireland, Ussher found himself exiled in England. The climate of debate there had much to do with ecclesiology and Ussher was appealed to by conformist and nonconformist alike. As a mediating position, Ussher developed what he called "reduced episcopacy" in *The Reduction of Episcopacy* (1656). In it Ussher maintained the role of bishops, yet combined them with ministerial synods; a presbyterian-episcopal reconciliation of sorts. He based his argument on patristic ecclesiology. Ultimately Ussher's views were not adhered to which contributed to a further rise in nonconformity after the Restoration and finally the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

So brief an introduction as this gives at least some indication that while Ussher did not compromise his beliefs, he nevertheless sought to incorporate differing views within the bounds of orthodoxy. He was what one may call a congenial man of conviction. There is much to learn from James Ussher, yet scholarship on him is minimal. Further explorations of his historiography, his interpretation of the Pelagian controversy, his text-critical genius, to name a few, would be welcome in the slowly growing Ussherian corpus.

Book Reviews

Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach. By Kenneth Keathley. Nashville: B&H, 2010, xiv + 232 pp., $24.99 paper.

Finding both classic Calvinism and classic Arminianism problematic for articulating the sovereignty of God in our salvation, Kenneth Keathley proposes an alternative to both. As Keathley understands these historic traditions, classic Calvinism upholds strong divine sovereignty but fails to account rightly for true human freedom and evangelistic zeal, whereas classic Arminianism accounts well for the role of human freedom in our salvation but is unable to account for strong divine sovereignty. Keathley's "Molinist approach" is offered to bring together both of these strengths—i.e., strong divine sovereignty and true human freedom in our salvation—while avoiding the weaknesses of each. As he asserts, "The Molinist model is the only game in town for anyone who wishes to affirm a high view of God's sovereignty while holding to a genuine definition of human choice, freedom, and responsibility.... The attractiveness of Molinism is that it presents a logically coherent view of providence, which holds that God is meticulously sovereign, while at the same time humans are genuinely free" (6, 9).

Keathley begins (chapter one) by outlining his biblical case for Molinism, which, he suggests, succeeds precisely in its understanding of and appeal to the divine omniscience. Neither mere foreknowledge of what we will do (as in classic Arminianism) nor omni-causal divine control of all human choices and actions (as in classic Calvinism) can yield a model that has the qualities of both strong sovereignty and genuine human freedom. But for Keathley, understanding rightly the divine omniscience holds the key to satisfying both concerns. Molinism proposes that God not only knows all that "could be" (i.e., knowledge of all possible states of affairs that could be true in one or more possible worlds—called God's "natural knowledge") and all that "will be" (i.e., knowledge of all actual states of affairs that make up the real world in which we live—called God's "free knowledge"), God also knows all that "would be" (i.e., knowledge of all things that free creatures would choose in various possible worlds in which circumstances vary from one world to another—called God's "middle knowledge"). And importantly, this "would be" or "middle knowledge" category is both in between God's knowledge of all possibilities and all actualities (hence, it is "middle" knowledge), and it is logically prior to God's choice to bring into existence this particular world. In other words, God's middle knowledge (i.e., his knowledge of what "would be") is "prevolitional"—it is logically prior to his volitional

decision to bring into existence this particular world, whose states of affairs he only foreknows (i.e., he knows all that "will be") the (logical) moment he chooses to create.

The cash value of "middle knowledge," for Keathley, is inestimably large. By God's middle knowledge, God can envision in his mind's eye (pre-volitionally) what his free creatures would decide in one or another possible world, as they would make their decisions in varying contexts, with varying circumstances. From the totality of choices that God envisions his free creatures making, he then can select a preferred set of possibilities within which certain free decisions would be made and bring it to pass that this possible world is the one that he freely creates. Keathley summarizes his view this way:

> From the infinite set of possible worlds that could happen (God's natural knowledge), there is an infinite subset of feasible worlds which would accomplish His will (God's middle knowledge). God freely chooses one of the feasible worlds, and He perfectly knows what will happen in the actual world (God's free knowledge). In the Molinist model, God sovereignly controls all things, yet humans possess real freedom for which they must give an account.... Molinism—and its advocacy of the concept of middle knowledge—is the one view of providence that holds to a consistent view of both biblical teachings (18-19).

Following his overview of Molinism, Keathley proceeds to lay out his understanding of the relation between divine sovereignty and our salvation. Chapter two answers affirmatively the question, "Does God Desire the Salvation of All?" Keathley appeals here to the distinction between "antecedent and consequent wills" in God, arguing that "God antecedently wills all to be saved. But for those who refuse to repent and believe, He consequently wills that they should be condemned" (58). Keathley finds this "two wills" model preferable to the singular divine will models of universalism and supralapsarian Calvinism, while he also finds it superior to the "two wills" Calvinist model that distinguishes the "hidden and revealed wills" of God. Oddly, Keathley does not explain just how his Molinism accounts for or aligns with the antecedent/consequent wills distinction, and his development here resembles most closely a classic Arminian understanding (as evidenced by his appeals to Shank, Tiessen, Geisler, Walls and Dongell in support of his view).

In the remainder of the book (chapters three through seven), Keathley's argument follows the acrostic "ROSES," as a replacement of and improvement on the 5-point Calvinist "TULIP." Chapter three defends "radical depravity," in which Keathley argues for "concurrence" over the Calvinist "determinism" as that which explains our entrance into sin, our complete inability to do good as sinners apart from grace, and our grace-enabled ability to grow in pleasing God through the Christian life. A key element here is Keathley's advocacy of "soft libertarian" freedom, which proposes that while most often our freedom is expressed by our having the power to choose one way or another, there are some "will-setting" choices in which our characters are formed, leading us henceforth to choose one way instead of another. Keathley's appeal to concurrence and soft libertarianism are central in his understanding of how sin affects us and the kind of freedom we have and by which we are held responsible.

Chapter four defends "overcoming grace," which he pits against the Calvinist doctrine of effectual calling or irresistible grace. He asks, "How do we formulate a theological system that genuinely gives God all the credit for grace and the sinner all the blame for unbelief?" His answer is found in his defense of "overcoming grace" which he claims is both monergist (i.e., God alone works to bring to pass the good we do by his grace) and resistible (i.e., we retain libertarian freedom by which we may refrain from resisting this grace or, instead, rebuff this grace). God, then, is the only

one who works to bring our salvation to pass, while we are called not to refuse or resist his gracious work. As such, God receives all the credit in our salvation and we, should we refuse, receive the blame. Keathley writes, "God's drawing grace should and would be efficacious for all. The only thing that could stop it is if, inexplicably, a person decides to refuse.... The question is no longer, 'Why do some believe?' but 'Why doesn't everyone believe?' The evil of unbelief remains a mystery, but this model moves this evil from God to the unbeliever" (106).

Chapter five defends Keathley's Molinist understanding of "sovereign election," contrasting it with both the supralapsarian and infralapsarian traditions in Calvinism and with the "passive foreknowledge" view of classic Arminianism. Since in Molinism, God is said to control all things while not being the determinative cause of all things, this leaves room for genuine human freedom to operate within the scope of God's "permissive" divine will. Keathley writes,

> When God made the sovereign choice to bring this particular world into existence, He rendered certain but did not cause the destruction of certain ones who would reject God's overtures of grace. According to Molinism, our free choice determines how we would respond in any given setting, but God decides the setting in which we actually find ourselves.... Molinists contend that God uses His exhaustive foreknowledge in an active, sovereign way [unlike the passive foreknowledge of Arminianism]. God determines the world in which we live. Whether I exist at all, have the opportunity to respond to the gospel, or am placed in a setting where I would be graciously enabled to believe are sovereign decisions made by Him.... In other words, God actively elected the saved but passively allows the ruin of the lost (154, 155, 160).

And although God sovereignly chose to create a world in which it would be certain that many would not be saved, this does not conflict with God's genuine desire that all be saved. For Keathley, "God has created a world with the maximal ratio of the number of saved to those lost" (153). Just why this is so, is not explained by Keathley. Given Keathley's claims of God's "meticulous sovereignty" through his use of middle knowledge, one would like to see why even with middle knowledge, the God who "desires all to be saved" was not able to create a world in which this desire was met.

Chapter six defends the view that "eternal life" is given to those who trust in Christ, and that assurance of salvation is found in our justification in Christ, not in our sanctification or growth in good works in the Christian life. Keathley sets his view against the backdrop of Reformed views that would stress the necessity of faith-wrought works as the evidence of one having exercised true saving faith. In contrast, Keathley suggests that the Reformation principle of *sola fide* means that our assurance of salvation is the objective work of Christ alone which we have embraced by faith and not the subjective transformation of character that, though commanded and desired, cannot form the basis of the believer's assurance. Assurance, then, is the essence of saving faith—trusting in the work of Christ and not in anything I can or should do before God. Good works are called forth from us, and will be rewarded by God, but they cannot be the basis of either our eternal life or of our assurance of having received that gift of eternal life.

Chapter seven closes out "ROSES" with a defense of the "singular redemption" brought about in Christ. Keathley understands his position, again, as something of a *via media* between classic Arminian and Reformed views. He writes, "The general atonement position [of Arminianism] sees the death of Christ as obtaining redemption for all but securing it for none. The limited atonement view [of 5-point Calvinism] understands Christ's death to secure salvation for the elect—but only for the elect. The singu-

lar redemption position [Keathley's view] understands Christ's death to provide salvation for all humanity, but the benefits of the atonement are secured only for those who believe, and those benefits are applied at the time of their conversion" (193). Much of the chapter presents his arguments against the limited atonement position of 5-point Calvinism and the case for his own version of singular redemption. Although he is aware of the "moderate Calvinist" 4-point view, he chooses not to interact with it, though it would have many affinities to his own position.

Having surveyed the overall scope and argument of the book, we turn now to a critical review of Keathley's proposal. Before detailing some of my concerns, I wish to begin by commending Keathley for providing a very thoughtful and engaging presentation of his middle knowledge understanding of the relation of divine sovereignty to the salvation of sinners. His view deals with many difficult issues, and he discusses these with competence throughout. I benefitted much from a careful reading of this book and have gained a heightened appreciation for Keathley's Molinist approach to these complex and weighty issues. But as one might suspect, a number of areas throughout the book raise questions and concerns, and it is to some of the most important of these that I now turn.

First, I find Keathley's claim that his Molinist approach satisfies the strengths of both the Calvinist and Arminian approaches unsustainable. As mentioned above, Keathley sees the strengths of classic Calvinism and Arminianism as their respective appeals to strong divine sovereignty (Calvinism) and genuine human freedom (Arminianism). And of these strengths, he asserts, "I argue that we must affirm God's ultimate sovereignty and man's genuine ownership of his choices in such a way that does not play fast and loose with the definitions of either truth" (15). But is it true that this Molinist model truly accounts for both truths as understood in each tradition? Let's take the Calvinist quality first. Keathley's assertions are strong and clear. He says, for example, that Molinism "argues that God *perfectly accomplishes* His will in free creatures" (5, emphasis added), that it "holds to a Calvinistic view of *comprehensive divine sovereignty*" (5, emphasis added), that it "holds that God is *meticulously sovereign*" (9, emphasis added), and that by it "God *sovereignly controls all things*" (18, emphasis added). But here's the problem: the only way that Keathley can sustain these claims is by re-defining them from what they actually mean in the Calvinist tradition.

To give a simple example, Keathley holds that God truly does desire all to be saved, and that the only reason people are not saved is that they persist in resisting God's grace brought to them. In other words, as in classic Arminianism, the libertarian freedom given to creatures means that when the gospel comes to them, they have the power to accept or refuse God's gift of salvation. Whether they accept or refuse is, ultimately, up to them, not God. And yet God does not want any to refuse. Isn't it clear, then, that God's sovereignty here is anything but "meticulous" or "comprehensive," and that it is not the case that God "sovereignly controls all things" or "perfectly accomplishes His will in free creatures"? Even though Keathley sees God using middle knowledge to achieve the optimal set of possibilities that he freely actualizes when he creates the world, still middle knowledge does not provide God the ability to ensure that exactly what he wants, in every situation and with every decision in the real world, is carried out. That there is sin and hell and massive evil and widespread refusal to believe the gospel testifies to this fact, in Keathley's model. Many, many other examples could be given. To give just one: if God meticulously controls all things, then he meticulously controlled the Holocaust. Does this mean that God designed the Holocaust and intended to bring it to pass for purposes he unilaterally planned and knew would be best when he conceived of the world that he willed to create? For Keathley, the answer must be, no. Rather, despite God's ability to utilize

the powerful resource of middle knowledge, it must be the case that he still could not create a world in which free creatures would not devise and carry out the Holocaust. Again, this hardly qualifies for "meticulous" sovereign control over the world God freely chooses to make. Keathley may truly mean it when he says that his Molinist model accounts for the Calvinist understanding of meticulous or comprehensive divine sovereignty, but if so, it shows that Keathley either does not understand correctly what Calvinists hold or that he is unaware that his model significantly redefines divine sovereignty in a way unacceptable to Calvinists. Molinism simply cannot accomplish, by its appeal to the divine omniscience (and to "middle knowledge," most centrally) what Calvinism secures by its appeal to comprehensive and exhaustive divine determination.

And what of Keathley's corresponding claim to account for libertarian freedom as held in the Arminian model? If Keathley had retained full and unqualified libertarianism, then his claim would be true. But instead, Keathley opts for "soft libertarianism" in which he envisions there being certain "will-setting" decisions. But if so, does this not cancel out our power of contrary choice, in which case we do not act freely? Or, if we retain this power of contrary choice, in what sense were these "will-setting" decisions? Part of the beauty (although, not its correctness!) of the libertarian model is its intuitive simplicity—we are free in making a choice precisely when, all things being just what they are when we make this choice, we could have at that moment chosen otherwise. But it does seem that Keathley's preference for soft libertarianism challenges the very core concept of libertarianism itself, and either calls for a new but non-libertarian concept of freedom (as with the compatibilist freedom of Calvinism), or his model ends up being internally contradictory. In any case, it seems that here, too, Keathley's claim to account for this strength of classic Arminianism is suspect, at best, and false, at worst.

Given that Keathley's Molinism represents correctly neither the concept of divine sovereignty (comprehensive, exhaustive, determinative sovereignty) as held in Calvinism nor the concept of freedom (libertarian freedom's power of contrary choice) as held in Arminianism, his claim to account for both is simply misguided. Keathley's Molinism clearly is a third alternative, but it cannot rightly be said that it incorporates Calvinism's high sovereignty and Arminianism's libertarian freedom. In fact it incorporates neither.

Second, Keathley seems either unaware of or he chose to ignore the major philosophical criticism of libertarian freedom that is brought against it by Calvinists. Granted, some of our actions in Keathley's soft libertarianism are "will-setting" (and I've already commented briefly on the conceptual problems here), nonetheless, the "bread and butter" concept of freedom upheld in Molinism, as in Arminianism, is libertarian freedom, in which we choose freely if and only if we have, at the point of our choosing, the power of contrary choice. But herein lays the problem. If it is the case that when we choose A, all things being just what they are when we make the choice for A, we could at that very moment instead have chosen not-A, or B, then what exactly accounts for why we chose A over not-A, or A over B? There seems no answer here, and this is why: for every reason or set of reasons you give for why you chose A, you would have to provide the identical reason or set of reasons for why, instead, you would have chosen not-A, or B. But, if every reason or set of reasons for choosing A is the identical reason or set of reasons for instead choosing not-A, or B, then there is no reason you can give for why you chose A *instead of* not-A, or A *instead of* B. Hence, your choices are, strictly speaking, arbitrary. This is why Calvinists refer to "libertarian freedom" as a "freedom of indifference"—precisely because if every reason you give for choosing A is identical to choosing not-A, then you are in fact indifferent to choosing A over not-A or not-A over A. Of course, this problem affects every theological model that relies on libertarian freedom and is not a unique problem of

Molinism. But it is Molinism's problem, too, and Keathley must deal with this if he hopes to present a compelling model. Simply asserting that libertarian freedom is "genuine" or "true" freedom may play well to those already convinced, but it rings hollow to those aware of this significant problem.

Third, Keathley's advocacy of overcoming grace as both monergistic and resistible also seems unworkable. Again here, definitions seem to have been "swapped out" without being clear that this has occurred. No Calvinist I know would be willing to accept Keathley's description of monergism as God doing all the work, which work we only must not refuse or resist. The problem is precisely that if we can refuse and resist God's gracious work which would otherwise lead to our salvation, this is an active, intentional, purposeful, willful and deliberate refusal. But if so, then our willingness not to refuse or resist God's gracious work would likewise (and perhaps even more so) be an active, intentional, purposeful, willful and deliberate willingness. After all, it is our decision (not God's) that ultimately decides whether we individually are saved or not. Whether one would be inclined to use the word "work" of what we do is debatable. Nevertheless, we are the decisive actors and our decision is the ultimate decision. Our involvement, then, is of paramount importance, and as such, it is strained beyond clear comprehension to call our salvation, in Keathley's model, truly monergistic.

Part of the strain felt in Keathley's insistence on "monergism" is seen in how he describes unbelief. As noted above, Keathley asserts, "God's drawing grace should and would be efficacious for all. The only thing that could stop it is if, inexplicably, a person decides to refuse.... The question is no longer, 'Why do some believe?' but 'Why doesn't everyone believe?'" (106). "Inexplicably?" Really? Keathley's drive to see us as nearly passive in our salvation leads him to underestimate vastly just how resolved and determined we are as sinners in our opposition to God and his gracious salvation. No, what is inexplicable is acceptance, not refusal. Indeed, apart from God's grace that regenerates dead hearts, opens blind eyes, and shows Christ as the glorious Savior that he is, no one would ever believe! As for me and my house, I'll stick with the question, "Why does anyone, ever, under any circumstances, believe?" And the answer can only be that God has drawn with irresistible grace.

And speaking of irresistible grace, Keathley fails to interact with the strongest passages and arguments that Calvinists have put forward for this doctrine. His dismissive stance here is odd, since he engages much other Calvinist argumentation elsewhere. But it stands as true: if the Bible teaches that God's saving grace is irresistible, then both Arminian and Molinist models fail. Much hinges on this very point, and Keathley has done his readers a disservice by not interacting with the substantial biblical and theological argumentation for irresistible grace.

Fourth, Keathley's treatment of "sovereign election" is confusing, if not contradictory. On the one hand, he clearly articulates a view, similar to that held in Arminianism, that "our free choice determines how we would respond in any given setting" (154), such that even though God regulates the setting (via middle knowledge) in which we hear the gospel, in that setting, when the gospel is presented, we freely (libertarian freedom) decide whether to respond in faith to the gospel or not. As indicated before, our decision, then, is the ultimate decision in whether we are saved or not. But on the other hand, Keathley also asserts, "Whether I ... have the opportunity to respond to the gospel, or am placed in a setting where I would be graciously enabled to believe are sovereign decisions made by Him" (155). This would indicate, it would seem, that God decides whether he grants some the very opportunity to hear the gospel, and for those granted a hearing, whether they are given grace that would enable them to respond positively to the gospel. The Calvinistic overtones here are notable, and it raises questions whether this is coherent within Keathley's larger theological model. After all, does God

want all to be saved? If so, would he not work (via middle knowledge) to give every person possible the opportunity to hear, and would he not grant enabling grace to all who hear? So, does it really make sense to speak of God electing (by his ultimate choice) those whom he will surely save by his grace? It seems that Keathley wants it both ways, but it is clear that neither he, nor anyone else, can have it both ways. Either God sovereignly and unilaterally chooses those whom he will save such that they (the elect) are given irresistible grace by which they, but they alone, will come to saving faith; or, God endeavors, via middle knowledge, to put as many people as possible in settings where they will freely accept the gospel offered to them, while he also accepts the fact that some (many?) will choose to resist and refuse the gift of salvation offered them. Yes, it is either/or, not both/and. Keathley's attempt to satisfy both a strong sense of God's electing grace, while also leaving the ultimate decision of salvation in the hands of libertarianly free creatures, simply fails.

Fifth and finally, Keathley's final two chapters argue for positions that are reasonably held within both Arminian and Calvinist circles. His criticism of certain Calvinist proposals on the place of works in our salvation (particularly his treatment of Schreiner and Caneday), and his negative assessment of limited atonement within 5-point Calvinism, were both less charitable and harsher critiques than fair, in my judgment. Actually, the views that he ends up advancing in both of these chapters are ones that are very close to the positions held by a number of Calvinists. Hence, his prior critique against some versions of Calvinist teachings serves to disguise the fact that Keathley's own constructive proposal fits already established views within both Arminianism and Calvinism.

I am grateful for the sustained treatment Keathley gave to a number of very difficult and important theological issues, and I appreciate the thoughtfulness he showed throughout the development of his own positions. In the end, though, I conclude that his model fails to accomplish what he set out to do, and that its many problems render it an untenable accounting of God's sovereign grace in the salvation of sinners.

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: 1859-2009. By Gregory A. Wills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, xiv + 566 pp., $35.00.

With the publication of this important and well-written sesquicentennial history of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Gregory Wills has provided a marvelous gift for the larger community. In addition, he has also provided a wonderful resource for Southern Baptists in general, and for all who are interested in the history of American Christianity. This work is more than a history of one of the most significant seminaries in the world; it is a running commentary on movements and issues within American Christianity and the Southern Baptist Convention as viewed through the window of Southern Seminary. The massive work reads like anything but a pedantic work of institutional history. This splendid portrait of the SBC's "mother seminary" reads more like a personal biography. Readers are given insightful and first-hand looks at the giants who have shaped the seminary—including Boyce, Broadus, Manly, Mullins, Robertson, Sampey, Dobbins, and so many more. The incredibly extensive research standing behind this work, as reflected in the footnotes, will serve historians well for years to come.

In many ways the hero for the story, and appropriately so, is James P. Boyce. The label "hero" is not reserved for Boyce alone, however, for the founding faculty members are also rightly honored. Their vision, sacrifice, and confidence in God are certainly worthy of imitation by this generation and those to come. Readers will sense the

challenges faced by all associated with the seminary's early days, while also seeing God's faithful provision and providential guidance along the way. For those who are unfamiliar with the Southern Seminary story, they will be inspired by reading the early chapters. For those who know the story, even for those who know it well, they will be amazed at the detail in Wills's account, while learning much, particularly related to the transition years from Boyce to Broadus. The struggle for Broadus from teaching scholar to administrator-leader contains many valuable lessons.

Two obvious themes for Wills in this book, which are found all along the winding roads of the seminary's history, are the importance of theological orthodoxy and the significance of faithful theological education, both for the churches and the denominational entities. Wills's defense of the necessity of orthodoxy in the seminary is given full expression in the sad story of C. H. Toy. This chapter brilliantly serves as a platform for Wills not only to make his case, but to help the readers see the larger implications in light of the movements that were simultaneously taking place in theological education in this country and in Europe. Wills attempts to draw similar applications from the issues surrounding the Whitsitt years. While readers will once again find Wills's research to be impeccable, as new details and twists in the old story are revealed, the Whitsitt and Toy controversies do not have the same implications for the thesis regarding faithful theological education.

Without question, the most influential Baptist leader in the country in the first half of the twentieth century was E. Y. Mullins. Wills's portrayal of Mullins as seminary leader and denominational statesman will receive applause by readers. His interpretation of Mullins as theologian will most likely be met with a mixed response. Clearly the theological focus moved from Boyce's emphasis on divine sovereignty to Mullins's paradigm characterized by personal revelation and experience. The initial inroads of Darwinian thought were introduced at the seminary and in some sectors of the SBC during the Mullins's era. For Wills, the response by Mullins was muddled and ambiguous. Wills concludes the lengthy discussion on Mullins by recognizing the efforts in the mid-1920s to reassert the importance of orthodoxy for the health of the seminary and the SBC.

Though Mullins shifted the theological discussion to new playing fields, he nevertheless contended for the Bible's full authority and reliability. This commitment evidences itself in Mullins's stirring address to the SBC in 1923 titled, "The Duties and Dangers of This Present Hour." At this time Mullins claimed that Southern Baptists believe that adherence to these foundational truths is a necessary condition of service for teachers in our Baptist institutions. Teachers in Baptist institutions, noted Mullins, should demonstrate loyalty to orthodox beliefs in their classroom teaching and in their service to churches. In this regard the concluding years of the long-term Mullins presidency underscore the two themes that shape Wills's thesis regarding the importance of orthodoxy and the significance of faithful theological education.

The Sampey and Fuller eras were both characterized by the manifold challenges coming out of the Great Depression. Moreover, the progressive theological tendencies ushered in by W. O. Carver in previous years were now expanding in their influence. Wills vividly describes these multiple challenges, preparing the reader for the key issues that were taking shape during the early years of Duke McCall's presidency. Wills's understanding of the key shaping years in the seminary's history is reflected in the multiple chapters given to the presidencies of Boyce, Mullins, and McCall.

The brilliant research skills of Greg Wills are perhaps most clearly seen in this volume in the unveiling of little known background information regarding the first decade of the McCall presidency, particularly the 1958 crisis. At stake, according to Wills, were the roles of trustees, administration, faculty, and the relation of

the seminary to the SBC. McCall defended the denomination before the faculty, while redefining the role of the administration. In doing so, McCall wisely clarified what he believed to be the distinction between a divinity school and a theological seminary.

While praising McCall for his leadership in the 1958 crisis, Wills devotes his second chapter on McCall's presidency to the loss of trust and the loss of orthodoxy at the seminary. Nevertheless, McCall receives praise for his courageous leadership in matters regarding desegregation and racial reconciliation. Before the end of McCall's three-decade long presidency, the SBC's conflict over the nature of Scripture was in full bloom with much of the debate centered on Southern Seminary, including its faculty and alumni.

The final chapters of the volume describe the issues at the seminary over the past twenty-five years, including the presidencies of Roy L. Honeycutt and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. Because these events are so recent, they were no doubt the hardest for Wills to write and interpret. The differences in approach and vision between the two administrations are amplified for the readers. Wills concludes by connecting the Mohler vision to that of the founding faculty, and the work of the volume's hero, James P. Boyce, in particular. In conclusion, Wills observes that Mohler embraced and embodied the Boyce vision as fully as anyone previously had ever done. Under Mohler's leadership, "Southern Seminary was once again Boyce's seminary." The seminary had once again reclaimed its commitment to the importance of theological orthodoxy and to the significance of faithful theological education for the churches and the denomination.

Southern Seminary has been a leading institution in American Christianity for a century and a half. The seminary's shaping initiatives have influenced the Southern Baptist Convention over this time like no other single entity. Many creative aspects regarding the expansion of theological education have been associated with the seminary: the study of the English Bible, research doctoral programs, the study of world religions, Christian education, pastoral care and psychology, social work, leadership, and programs associated with the Billy Graham School. Wills carefully depicts the ebb and flow, the personal struggles and emotional challenges associated with these various initiatives.

While not everyone will agree with every interpretation offered in this volume, few will disagree that rarely has such a comprehensive institutional history ever been penned and told so well. The detailed research is not only brilliantly presented, but communicated in a fascinating and interesting manner. Wills has given the Southern Seminary family a first-rate and scholarly history that will serve that community for years to come. Moreover, he has given students of American Christianity, including students of the Southern Baptist Convention, an invaluable resource regarding the influence of theological institutions for the life and overall health of churches and their denominations. We congratulate Greg Wills on this masterfully researched volume on what many believe to be Southern Baptists' most influential and shaping institution.

—David S. Dockery
President
Professor of Christian Thought and Tradition
Union University

Ezekiel: A Commentary. By Paul M. Joyce. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies. New York: T & T Clark, 2009, ix + 310 pp., $49.95 paper.

Paul M. Joyce is University Lecturer in Theology in the University of Oxford and a Fellow of St. Peter's College, Oxford. Currently he is the Chairman of the Theology Faculty Board in the University of Oxford and co-chairs the Society of Biblical Literature's "Theological Perspectives on the Book of Ezekiel" Section. Joyce's purpose in

his commentary is to make a contribution to the interpretation and understanding of the book of Ezekiel, especially in terms of its theology with attention to historical and literary issues.

Therefore, before providing a chapter-by-chapter discussion of the book of Ezekiel, Joyce begins by discussing several issues such as the time and place of Ezekiel's ministry. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing Ezekiel's activities happening in the sixth century BC in Babylonia. Another concern is how much of the book of Ezekiel is actually from the prophet and how much of it is actually secondary. He proposes that while most of the book may be attributed to Ezekiel, parts of it may not be from the prophet. He states, "We must endeavor where possible, then, to discriminate between primary material and secondary elaboration, but we must undertake this task in the realization that 'assured results' will be rare" (16). Even though Joyce's attributing most of the book to Ezekiel is more conservative than what most scholars maintain, it is not necessarily obvious that any major sections come from secondary sources. In fact, his attributing chapters 40-48, chapters pertaining to the temple, to a secondary source fail to recognize a major aspect of the book of Ezekiel: Ezekiel the priest.

Necessary to understanding Ezekiel's ministry is recognizing the significance of his being a priest. Joyce acknowledges the "priestly affinities of much of the material" (13). He continues stating, "there seems little doubt the witness of the book of Ezekiel was himself a priest and one would therefore expect his own style to reflect this" (13). However, Joyce gives little attention to the significance of Ezekiel's being a priest. He misses this theme as the book of Ezekiel begins. He provides unconvincing evidence for the "thirtieth year" in Ezekiel 1:1 to refer to the thirtieth year of the exile and rejects the more natural understanding that it refers to Ezekiel's age, thirty being the age one began priestly ministry in Israel. The Lord would not have maligned the defilement of the temple only to defile it himself by taking a layperson into the restricted sanctuary even in a vision. Ezekiel's role in safeguarding the sanctity of the sanctuary, his extensive use of cultic language, his emphasis on impurity and death, his reception of the temple instructions, and his participation in the consecration offering of the altar all are some of the examples pointing to the centrality of Ezekiel's priestly office to his prophetic ministry. One might even ask, "Was Ezekiel a priestly prophet, or was he a prophetic priest?"

Besides this shortfall, Joyce is to be commended for providing helpful discussions on the major theological themes of the book of Ezekiel and for demonstrating how the chapters of the book present these themes.

—T. J. Betts
Associate Professor of
Old Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Olive Tree BibleReader 4. Spokane, WA: Olive Tree Bible Software, Inc.

In recent years—and particularly with advances in technology—the number of resources available to help one read and study the Bible has exploded. Computer software has transformed advanced Bible study. No longer is it necessary to look up a Greek word in a huge, five-pound concordance to discover its every occurrence in the New Testament. Now with a click of a mouse, such searches, and much more, can be accomplished instantly. No longer does one need shelves full of commentaries, dictionaries, and lexicons. Through various Bible software programs, all of these are immediately accessible and searchable on your PC or Mac. However, not only are we no longer limited to print versions of Bible study resources, but we are also no longer limited to desktops and notebooks for our software. The rise in the use of smartphones and e-readers for computing and connectivity means that Bible study software has gone mobile.

A digital publisher at the forefront of producing Bible resources for mobile devices is Olive Tree Bible Software. The Olive Tree BibleReader was first released for the Palm Pilot in 1998. Today, according to the company's website (www.olivetree.com), BibleReader 4 is available on 98% of the smartphones in the world. The BibleReader mobile app(lication) itself is free, and many resources are available as free downloads, such as various Bible translations, eBook versions of Christian classics (e.g., Augustine's *Confessions*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, etc.), and sermon collections (e.g., Luther, Spurgeon, Whitefield, and even John Piper). The academic resources and reference materials available for purchase are many of the same items available through traditional Bible software for desktops and notebooks. Examples include the New American Commentary Series, a Bible atlas, the *ESV Study Bible*, Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Louw and Nida's Greek Lexicon, and the *IVP Bible Background Commentary*.

My focus in this review, however, is on the Greek and Hebrew texts available for the BibleReader. As noted above, the BibleReader is supported on many mobile platforms (see the Olive Tree website for a list, as well as to learn which platforms support the original language texts), but I will consider it from the perspective of my own device—the iPhone (other Apple devices that support the BibleReader include the iPod Touch and the iPad). While a few original language texts are available as free downloads (such as the Westcott-Hort NT), those available for purchase on the iPhone include the Nestle-Aland (NA27) Greek New Testament, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS), and the Septuagint (LXX) edited by Rahlfs. Moreover, morphologically tagged versions of each of these texts can also be purchased that provide full parsings, as well as lexical information. The parsing information is made available through the following morphological databases: Mounce-Koivisto (NA27), Michigan-Claremont-Westminster (BHS), and Kraft-Taylor-Wheeler (LXX). The definitions are provided by the UBS Dictionary (NA27), BDB Lexicon (BHS), and LEH Lexicon (LXX). Simply touching a word in the text generates a window with a hyperlinked entry that provides the lexical form, parsing, and gloss. From this, one can then choose to open the lexicon for the full, detailed entry on the word. The lexicons are also available as standalone books, allowing one to look up specific words without linking from the Greek and Hebrew texts.

The BibleReader offers a number of very useful benefits and features: (1) The sheer mobility is extremely convenient. Print versions of the GNT, BHS, and LXX need never leave my office (BHS and LXX are by no means thin!). Whether I am researching in the library, reading at home or church, referencing a passage in class, or traveling, I have no need to carry my hardcopies with me. Having the biblical texts so easily transportable is a definite advantage. (2) Unlike some other mobile Bible software, the Olive Tree texts are actually stored on your mobile device. Since you are not accessing your digital library from a network, connectivity is not an issue. Everything is immediately available. (3) Like desktop software programs, BibleReader is capable of advanced original language searches, whether you search for specific words/phrases or search by morphological characteristics. (4) Personal notes can be added on specific Bible verses. These can then be accessed by verse from any Bible version in your BibleReader library. Moreover, you can back up your notes to your Evernote account (if you have one; see www.evernote.com). (5) BibleReader allows split-screen reading so that you can view two Bible translations side-by-side, thus allowing you to compare your Greek and Hebrew texts to an English translation or to compare the readings of BHS and the LXX on a given text. (6) All titles that you purchase are tracked in your online account in case you need to download another copy. This is helpful for a variety of reasons, not least of which is if you switch to a new mobile plat-

form (assuming the resource is available for the new platform). (7) Olive Tree offers a number of instructional videos (and articles), either online or through the BibleReader, offering tutorials on searching, note taking, and more.

I must confess that when it comes to reading, I much prefer a book in my hand to staring at a computer screen. Personally, I would rather pull a commentary off of my shelf than peruse a digital one (though I readily confess that the latter has some clear benefits). However, with regard to studying the Greek and Hebrew texts, the BibleReader offers amazing advantages over printed texts in terms of usability, efficiency, and searchability. And its mobility rivals traditional Bible software programs. Pastors, scholars, and students who use smartphones or other mobile devices will be excited about Olive Tree's BibleReader and may find that it revolutionizes their Bible study.

[Postscript: After I completed this review, Olive Tree released BibleReader 5 with additional improvements and features.]

—Christopher W. Cowan
Acquisitions Editor
B&H Academic

We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry. By G. K. Beale. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008, 341 pp., $26.00 paper.

G. K. Beale is well known for significant contributions to biblical scholarship in general and biblical theology in particular. The volume under review here complements his commentary on Revelation, his work on the Old Testament in the New, and his recent work, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*. Beale states his thesis clearly and argues it convincingly: "What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration" (16, italics removed). After an introductory chapter, Beale establishes his thesis in Isaiah 6, then broadens out to show it from the rest of the OT. He narrows the lens again in chapter four to focus on the origin of idolatry in the OT, before tracing the thesis through the "intertestamental bridge" of the literature from early Judaism. Beale then examines the theme in the Gospels, giving particular attention to the use of Isaiah 6 in all four gospels. He proceeds through the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles, concluding the direct examination of the Bible with a chapter on the book of Revelation. The volume is rounded out with two chapters: the first examines the reversal of the process of idolaters becoming like their idols as they worship the true and living God, and in the conclusion Beale pastorally applies his findings to contemporary culture.

In the introduction Beale explains, "we will proceed primarily by tracing the development of earlier biblical passages dealing with this theme and how later portions of Scripture interpret and develop these passages (what is today referred to as 'intertextuality' or 'inner-biblical allusion')" (16). As he elaborates on his interpretive perspective, Beale affirms both the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and the accessibility of the divine author's intentions communicated through the human authors of the biblical texts. He seeks to combine grammatical-historical exegesis with canonical-contextual exegesis, relying on the criteria for validating allusions to earlier texts in later ones set forth by Richard B. Hays. Against those who are opposed to allowing the meaning of later texts to influence the interpretation of earlier ones, Beale writes, "If the presupposition that God ultimately has authored the canon is correct, the later parts of Scripture unpack the 'thick description' of earlier parts.... My view is that if a later text is truly unpacking the idea of an earlier text, then the meaning developed by the later text was originally included in the 'thick meaning' of the earlier text" (26). The idea is that later biblical authors correctly understood earlier biblical texts and commented upon them. This obliges interpreters "'to recover unstated or suppressed correspondences between the two texts' (quoting Hays).... [P]art of this task is to discern such

interpretive links that are not verbally stated by the writer making the quotation or allusion" (28). Beale explains that he is "trying to forge a newer way of doing biblical theology in the English-speaking world," wherein he attempts "to focus on and interpret those Old Testament texts that [are] repeatedly alluded to and quoted in subsequent Scripture, both later in the Old Testament and in the New Testament" (27).

This is an important and helpful work. Beale writes, "I would characterize my biblical-theological approach to be canonical, genetic-progressive (or organically developmental), and intertextual" (34). He convincingly demonstrates his thesis with meticulous (and at times painstaking) detail. It would be hard to overturn Beale's thesis, given that it is explicitly stated in Psalm 115:4-8, and again in 135:15-18. The connections that Beale makes between texts are always stimulating, even if some are more convincing than others.

This book deserves a wide reading, especially among those who seek demonstrable ways to understand the unified theology of the whole Bible. I have a minor quibble about an interpretive matter here and there, none of which impinge on the book's main thesis, and I think that at points the thesis was pursued in ways that might eclipse other important aspects of the texts under discussion. But no book can do or say everything, and everything that Beale sets out to do in this book he does very, very well. This book is exemplary, setting high standards for methodological precision, control of primary and secondary sources, and bringing out the wealth of meaning these texts contain. Here's a warning: if you read this book, you will begin to see the thesis Beale establishes all over the Bible. You'll also be spurred to return to the texts, to ask questions about how earlier texts are being interpreted, and to establish the connections between texts with criteria that can be examined and understood. I join Beale in the prayer with which he closes the volume: "I pray that all who read this book will revere the Lord in his Word and resemble him for restoration and redemption. May God be with us as the true, new people of God" (311).

—James M. Hamilton, Jr.
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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Toying with God: The World of Religious Games and Dolls. By Nikki Bado-Fralick and Rebecca Sachs Norris. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010, xvi + 232 pp., $24.95 paper.

In a couple hundred pages of text and pictures, Nikki Bado-Fralick and Rebecca Sachs Norris manage to meander across a broad range of religious traditions and to dabble in psychological streams that flow from sources as diverse as Carl Jung and Jean Piaget—all while maintaining their focus on religious expressions and functions of games and dolls. The result is a well-written volume that, if nothing else, provides a thorough compendium of information on the various functions of religious toys. Some discussions in the book border on the trivial. Yet, with few exceptions, even the trivia (such as the extended discussion of "Fulla," a Muslim variation of the Barbie doll) tend to provide fascinating glimpses into what happens when the toy aisle turns religious. Nikki Bado-Fralick directs the religious studies program at Iowa State University, while Rebecca Sachs Norris teaches religious and theological studies at Merrimack College. Both professors utilize religious playthings in their teaching, and they draw many of their examples from their students' in-class experiences with these games and toys.

One theme provides a recurring touchstone throughout the text: Both religion and play entail embodied expressions of perceptions or realities that stand outside rational categorization (183-84); as a result, the human experiences of play and of the sacred overlap with one another. The border between ritual and play is "permeable, porous, and mutually interpenetrating" (167). By mingling

the corporeal realm with that which cannot be confined to words or matter, both religion and play serve to break down "dualistic ways of perceiving the world" (184). And indeed, from the perspective of Bado-Fralick and Norris, any "set-apartness" or separation between realities is the error that is to be avoided at all cost. The authors wax rhapsodic as they describe how "in many cultures religion is not relegated to a specific hour of Friday, Saturday, or Sunday worship in a building that is set apart. For some, religion is found under a full moon in a grove of trees, in the wind blowing across the plains, or through snow falling on water" (xii). "The sacred is not a separate realm. It is the ground of the universe and is immanent," they write, echoing Paul Tillich's description of God as "the ground of being" (xi).

Such a perspective presents an obvious problem for evangelical Christians. In contradistinction to the perspective presented in *Toying with God*, there is for Christians a real and authentic dualism—though not of the sort that the Gnostics derived from Plato or even of the sort that Bado-Fralick and Norris see in the setting apart of certain days and places for worship. God is separate from his world yet present within his world, and he has revealed himself to humanity in Jesus Christ. The Christian distinction is between that which is "in Christ" and that which is outside of Christ. For Christians, it is not humanity's experience of the "ground of the universe" that draws together the spiritual and the corporeal in perfect harmony but the incarnation and the redemption that has been accomplished in Jesus Christ.

Despite these difficulties, *Toying with God* provides a starting-point for much fruitful reflection. Bado-Fralick and Norris rightly point out that, for a religious theme or character to be produced as a game or toy, some aspect is likely to be "watered down for mass consumption" (117). Jesus dolls and action figures spout a limited list of aphorisms that will be palatable to a particular target audience (180). Games produced to convey Christian truth boast that "no Bible knowledge" is needed to play (116). The problem that the authors perceive in all of this is that a sacred experience which was once "embedded in a complex historical, cultural, and religious context" becomes separated from a larger tradition and from the faith-community (116-17).

For those who take the text of Scripture to represent the authority of Jesus himself, however, the stakes are far higher than mere separation of a sacred experience from a larger tradition or community. God has revealed himself through particular words and works within human history, and these events have been accurately conveyed to us through the authoritative text of Scripture. Because Christian faith is rooted in these particular words and acts in history, these texts and truths are not malleable, freely adaptable to our own whims and styles and experiences. We are responsible not merely to remain connected to a tradition or to a community but to testify truthfully to the historical words and works of God himself.

The examples found throughout *Toying with God* suggest that, once the characters and principles in God's metanarrative are converted into playthings, the tendency is to remake God's words and acts to fit the felt needs of the consumer. "This talking Jesus doll is so encouraging, like a real friend," declares the website for the Holy Huggables Jesus doll. "He says things that reassure us of what Jesus says to us in Scripture, like 'I love you and have an exciting plan for your life'" (180). Never mind that these words are not to be found anywhere in Scripture; these are the "encouraging" words that children need a "real friend" to say as they snuggle down to sleep. In the flyer for "Spirit Warriors" action figures, Samson is shown battling Goliath—an encounter which, while intriguing, is not to be found anywhere in the divine metanarrative (49). One Jesus action figure has glow-in-the-dark hands while another comes with accessories to switch water with wine.

In board games, biblical truths are extracted from their context such that, for example, Luke 6:35 becomes a proof-text on a card by which lending another player $600 can result in "20,000

Eternal Treasures" (80). In another game, having earned thirty or more "Testimonies" enables a player to forgive a neighbor (and to gain fifteen bonus Testimonies!), whereas players who have racked up fewer than thirty Testimonies find themselves unable to forgive (81). One wonders where the gospel or the work of the Holy Spirit fits into such scenarios.

As Bado-Fralick and Norris note, there is a tendency to "project whatever we need" onto action figures, dolls, and games (67). And yet, if it is God's story that shapes us rather than the other way around, remolding God's works and deeds into games of conquest, talking vegetables, chubby-cheeked cherubs, plush dolls, and plastic action figures should raise some significant questions in the minds of Christians. In general, one might say that the importance of accurately conveying a particular historical truth in the present is inversely proportional to the suitability of recasting this event as a game or toy. If the words and works of God in history matter in highly significant ways here and now, remolding these events as playthings becomes problematic at best.

The value of *Toying with God* is twofold: It is a useful compendium of information on religious toys and games—this, the authors probably intended. The second value is one which neither Bado-Fralick nor Norris probably planned: For the Christian, the book inadvertently provides evidence of our own proclivity for idolatry even in one of the most mundane areas of life, the ways that we play. It could be hoped that reading this text would result not only in a capacity to consider religious toys more critically but also in a willingness to examine our own hearts for ways that we may be remolding God's Word to fit our own agendas.

—Timothy Paul Jones
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Discipleship and Family Ministry
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Is God Calling Me? Answering the Question Every Leader Asks. By Jeff Iorg. Nashville: B&H, 2008, 115 pp., $9.99 paper.

Any church leader who has encouraged his members to consider God's call knows that the question found in the title of this book is a common one. This work, written by the president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, is a concise, clear, and straightforward guide to answering that question.

Iorg states upfront that this work is not an exhaustive look at God's calling. His goal is simply to provide "field-tested insights" to help believers clarify calling and respond in obedience. The testing "field" is primarily Iorg's own life, as he has sought and followed God's will from seminary student to pastor to denominational leader to seminary president. This approach strengthens the book by allowing the reader to hear Iorg's story and sense his gratitude for his own calling. For example, his review of the blessings his family received when he served as pastor is both enlightening and inspiring.

Five chapters address the concept of a "call"—types of calls, methods of God's calling, means to discern God's call, and effects of God's call. The final two chapters of the book specifically address the calls to missions and to pastoral ministry. In the middle of the book is an important chapter illustrating that God calls people that we might consider unexpected or unqualified; however, the chapter seems out of order in the middle of general discussions of God's call. For those readers already struggling with the concept that God might be calling them, this chapter might have been better placed earlier in the book.

Iorg classifies "calls" under three categories: a universal call to Christian service and growth; a general call to ministry leadership (e.g., pastor or missionary); and a specific call to a ministry assignment. Each of these calls develops out of the previous one, like the opening of a collapsible telescope. God calls primarily through crisis (e.g., a

sudden life crisis), contemplation (reasoned decisions), and community (the prompting of others), though all calls are supernatural. Further discernment of that call comes through inner peace, confirmation from others, effectiveness in ministry, and joy in the ministry.

Some readers may question Iorg's conclusion that a call is "a profound impression from God," something you just know "in your heart." Others may debate whether sufficient attention is given to the issue of character when considering one's call. Some may disagree with Iorg's call to formalized ministry training, despite the fact that he credibly argues in this direction. Nevertheless, this work is a valuable resource that reflects the thoughts of a seminary president seeking to help a young generation understand God's call. That generation and those who lead them will appreciate the brevity of this w ork, the clarity of its guidance, and the pastoral concern of its author.

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Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Teaching that Transforms: Facilitating Life Change through Adult Bible Teaching. By Richard R. Melick, Jr. and Shera Melick. Nashville: B&H, 2010, 337 pp., $29.99.

The authors' stated purpose is to present "an easily understood method for study and teaching the Bible." They divide the book into three parts: the nature of the Bible and how to understand it; various theories of adult learning during the past sixty years; and the Star Method of Transformational Teaching.

The book appears to be targeting both teachers in the local church and students in colleges and universities. Almost all of their illustrations are derived from experiences in the local church, but for the average Bible teacher in the church, much of this book is too meticulous and detailed to keep a layperson engaged in the content. While I appreciate and agree with the emphasis on knowing and correctly interpreting the Bible, I do not believe the average lay teacher will endure to section two. If they do, the theories of adult learning will be irrelevant to most lay teachers who simply want to know how to teach effectively their lesson next Sunday.

For the college or seminary student, the book presents a good overview of the theories of adult learning and some critical aspects of teacher preparation and presentation. For most seminary classes, however, it is not comprehensive enough. The authors never mention Robert Mager, selected by the International Society for Performance Improvement as the most influential individual in the field of instructional education. His book, *Preparing Instructional Objectives*, is one of the Museum of Education's "Books of the Century." They have a brief reference to *Design for Teaching and Training* by LeRoy Ford but reference his 1998 edition and not the updated 2002 edition.

The Melicks promote adults taking responsibility for their own learning. They believe Christian educators need to move from being the authority in the classroom to facilitator and then consultant (126). As an educator, I agree with this concept. We want adults to be like the Bereans who "examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11, NIV). There is a danger, however, in this concept being misunderstood. Christian teachers must be certain to teach the Word with authority for the Word is the authority, not the learner's discovery. They give a little balance to this approach when they say, "Christians may learn significantly through dialogue, but in the end, commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible, shape our understanding of truth" (146). There is a reason the Bible says teachers of the Word will be held accountable (Jas 3:1). God's Word is truth and we make no apology for teaching the Word with authority.

I appreciate the authors' emphasis on knowing and teaching the Word. Much of the book will be helpful to teachers at every level. The Melecks, however, should have written two books, one for laypeople and one for colleges and seminaries. In attempting to accomplish both in one volume, they accomplish neither.

—Brian C. Richardson
Basil Manly Jr. Professor of
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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Introducing the New Testament: A Short Guide to Its History and Message. By D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo. Edited by Andrew David Naselli. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010, 169 pp., $12.99 paper.

Andrew David Naselli, a doctor of philosophy graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in theological studies (New Testament) and author of *Let Go and Let God?* (Logos, 2010), recently condensed the formative volume of introductory New Testament studies by D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo entitled, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. The resulting work is *Introducing the New Testament: A Short Guide to Its History and Message, a short, readable, and helpful guide to basic matters of NT content and form.*

The text offers a book-by-book approach and asks seven basic questions of each book: what it is about, who wrote it, where was it written, when was it written, to whom was it written, why was it written, and what it contributes to our understanding of the faith. *Introducing the New Testament* will serve pastors, Sunday school teachers, college workers, and lay Christians well in their work to quickly grasp the core data of the New Testament, which must be the backbone of any proper biblical inquiry. The text also concisely covers core question of NT studies, offering chapters on such important topics as the Synoptic Gospels, the features of NT letters, and Paul as apostle and theologian.

It is possible to overlook an introductory volume like this text due to its shortness and concision. This would be a most injudicious conclusion. Many summaries are of great value, particularly when those summaries stem from a lifetime in the NT and the fields of scholarship and research it has produced. Whether considering discussions of Lukan authorship, theological contributions of the book of Romans to Christian doctrine, or the core ideas of the book of Revelation, the volume leads the reader to swift and weighty conclusions. The marriage of brevity and careful judgment is a strength, not a weakness, of *Introducing the New Testament*.

Naselli's editing has yielded excellent results. The book's frequent usage of lists will aid many in their study, while others will in places wish for a more narratival approach. This small point does not obviate the helpfulness of the book, which is warmly commended as a brief but potent resource guide that will ultimately lead the reader "to obey with joy your Maker and Redeemer" who is the center not only of the NT but of the Bible itself (163).

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